

# ITALIA!

Issue 125 April 2015 £4.40

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# Welcome!



Walking is, for many, a means of keeping fit and for taking in countryside experiences that would otherwise be so easily overlooked. It's a healthy pleasure that should be enjoyed by all. In this issue of *Italia!* we feature two very different experiences of hiking through Italy and its islands. Regular contributor

Fleur Kinson takes time to experience the less frenetic aspects of fashionable Capri by spending two days trekking and soaking in the remarkable topography of the island (see page 40), whilst Lysa Walder embarks on a rather more ambitious adventure, walking a full 500 kilometres from Tuscany to Rome, all in the cause of raising money for Amnesty International (page 52).

For those of you who enjoy Italy's bountiful food and wine, we have with a wonderful selection of recipes in this issue – on page 78 you'll find Ursula Ferrigno's fantastic selection of dishes to cook this Easter, on page 73 we have Ursula's *Four Takes on Pizza*, and on page 82 we introduce a new feature, *Pronto: Meals in Minutes*, as requested by our readership survey of last year. Wash these down with our selection of top-end Pinot Grigio wines (see page 89).

Finally, a quick congratulations of contributor Mark Nicholls, whose feature on Cortina d'Ampezzo (issue 119) achieved runner-up at the Italian Tourist Board awards for Best Feature last night (as I write).

*Paul P.*

**Paul Pettengale** Editor

*PS Italia!*'s brand new guide to *City Breaks and Weekend Escapes* is on sale now (£7.99). Visit [www.italytravelandlife.com/italiaguides](http://www.italytravelandlife.com/italiaguides) for details.

*All Roads Lead to Rome, page 52.*

## SUBSCRIBE TO ITALIA!

Subscribe to *Italia!* and save money on the usual price\* and get the magazine delivered directly to your door every month! Turn to page 30 for more information.

\*UK orders only

**AWARD WINNER!**  
The Italian Tourist Board voted *Italia!* the 'Best Overall Publication 2011'



## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



**LYSA WALDER** is an intrepid walker, raising money for charity by taking on epic treks. In this issue she describes her fantastic journey inspired by the life of St Francis of Assisi,

walking for 500 kilometres from Tuscany to visit friends in the capital city of Rome. Find out who she met along the way and how she endured her mission on page 52.



**FLEUR KINSON** has been busy this month! Not only has she written our regular *Homes In...* feature (though it's *Homes On...* this time around as we're featuring Italian

island properties – see page 20), but she's taken time out to spend 48 hours walking around the exclusive island of Capri. Join her on page 40 to find out how she got on.



**URSULA FERRIGNO** is a renowned Italian cook with a vast portfolio of respected cookery books. She specialises in bakery and breads, though in this issue of *Italia!* she presents *4 Takes*

on pizza and a selection traditional recipes for an Italian Easter. So if you're wondering what to cook come the weekend of 5 April turn to page 78.





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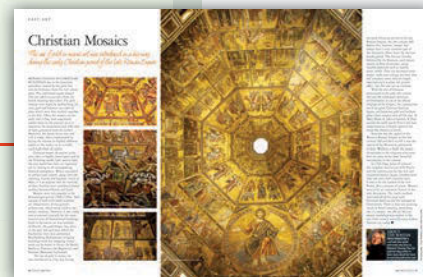


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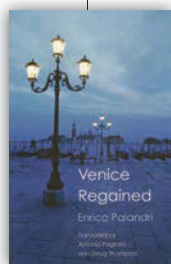
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## ON THE COVER



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# READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION!



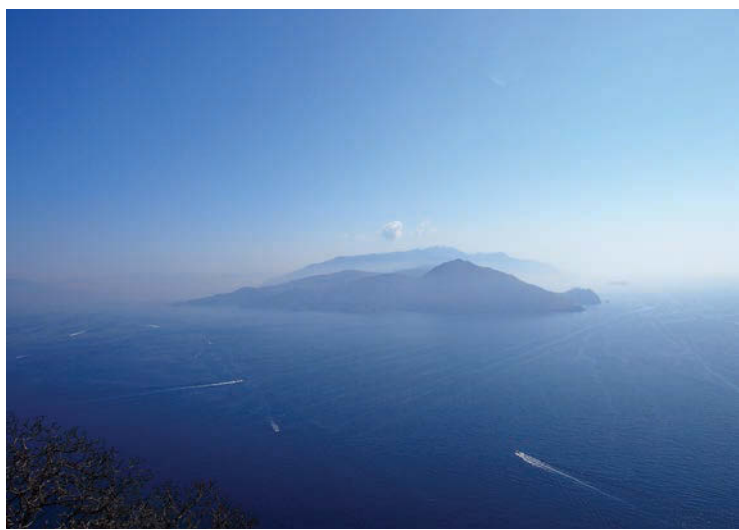
Send us your favourite photos from your Italian travels, and each month the best photo will win a bottle of **Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco** and cooler!\*



## THIS MONTH'S WINNER

*Rebecca Monarchi, Jessup, Pennsylvania*

"My husband's grandparents emigrated from Gubbio to Jessup, PA. Every year the town recreates the famous Festa dei Ceri. My husband and I were lucky enough to attend the original this year in Gubbio – the trip of a lifetime – and I took this picture of some young boys waiting for the festivities to begin. The yellow shirts are rooting for Sant'Ubaldo, the black for Sant'Antonio and the blue for San Giorgio."



▲ *Mathew Maiolo, by email*

"My wife and I were lucky enough to travel to Capri and the Amalfi Coast this year – something we have wanted to do for a while now. On this day we were up early and hiked up to the far western end of Capri, where we were able to look across the sea back to the Amalfi Coast. We sat here for what seemed like hours just gazing out."



▲ *Mrs Rona Hayward, Whitchurch*

"In June this year my husband and I were in the shade of an old olive tree by the amphitheatre in Lecce when these two little chaps came out to enjoy the sun. Happy days!"



**WIN!**  
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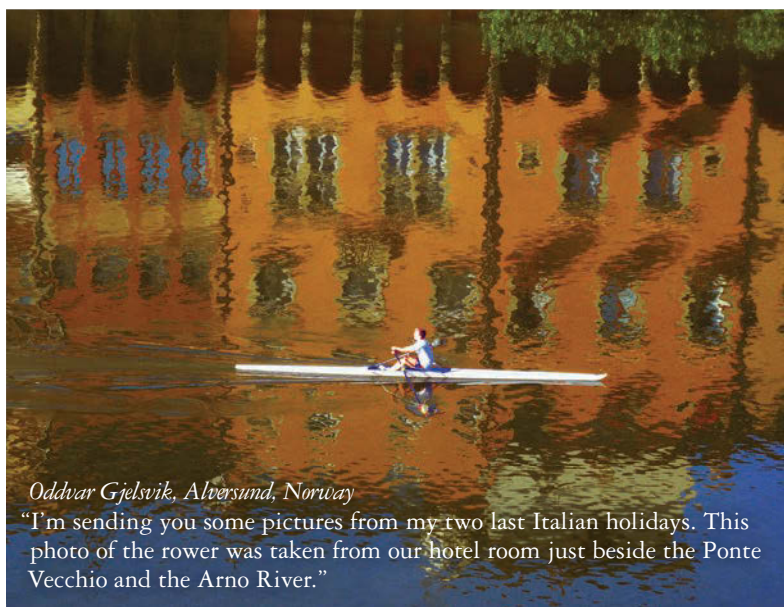
*Caroline Gray, Gosforth*

"Looking over to Cortona, beautiful Tuscany in summertime."



▼ *Ms Dale Jennings, North Carolina*

"A convex mirror warning of oncoming traffic on a very narrow road in Assisi. It's as if the mirror becomes its own wide-angle lens. I saw a photograph within the photograph!"



*Oddvar Gjelsvik, Alversund, Norway*

"I'm sending you some pictures from my two last Italian holidays. This photo of the rower was taken from our hotel room just beside the Ponte Vecchio and the Arno River."

**HOW TO ENTER** Email high-resolution (300dpi) jpegs of your photos of Italy to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com) or send prints to 'Reader Photo Competition' at the address given on page 18. Please include a brief explanation of your photo, plus your name, delivery address and a phone number (for our couriers). You must be over 18 to enter.

**READER OFFER** *Italia!* readers get a 10 per cent discount off Nino Franco wines from [www.sommelierschoice.com](http://www.sommelierschoice.com) until 1 June 2015 by entering the code 'italia10' at the checkout.

Please note: Any photos you submit must be your own work and you must have the right to send them for inclusion on this page. By sending your entry, you are confirming that *Italia!*'s use of your photo(s) will not constitute infringement of any rights, and confirming that you are over 18.



\*Prosecco and cooler delivered to mainland UK addresses only



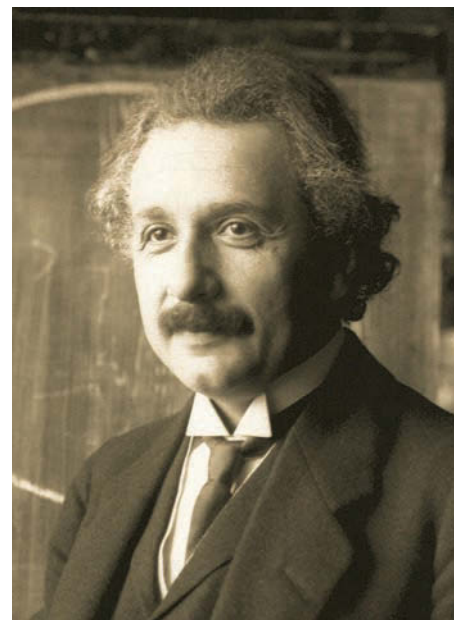
# THIS MONTH

## *April 2015*

In **Italian news** this month, Einstein spoke Italian, but the Italian Navy does not, Katy Perry loves Italy – maybe it's the fish'n'chips...

### USING ENGLISH IS NOT COOL!

Italian is generally regarded as one of the most poetic languages in the world. So you can imagine how disgruntled the natives are at the increasing use of English – and, worse, Americanisms – in major advertising campaigns in the country. The latest example is a recruitment poster for the Italian Navy, which is emblazoned with the English words, "Be cool – join the Navy." The trend has incurred the wrath of Fabio Rampelli, a politician with the right-wing Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) party, who told parliament, "I ask myself how it came into the mind of the Italian Navy to launch, with our money, a campaign in the English language to recruit young people." Advertising consultant Annamaria Testa added her own tuppence-worth to the debate, likening the move to "putting ketchup on macaroni". They have a point – when your country has given the world Latin and the poetry of Dante, why borrow someone else's language?

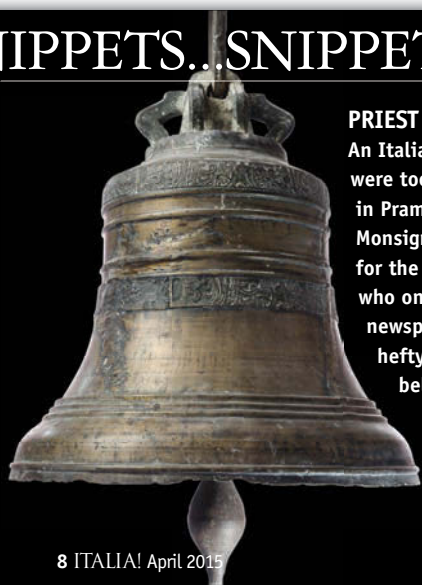


### EINSTEIN'S ITALIAN LETTER FETCHES A MINT

Not only was Albert Einstein a genius at physics, he was also pretty good at speaking different languages. In 1925, the Austrian scientist wrote a letter in Italian defending his theory of relativity to engineer Giovanni Giorgi – and that letter has just fetched a whopping £49,000 at auction! The document is believed to be a rare example of Einstein's knowledge of Italian, and a spokesman for RR Auction in Boston, Massachusetts, where the sale took place, enthused, "This magnificent letter is rife with intriguing content – each and every sentence contains a revelatory turn and could be expounded upon at length within the context of Einstein's life and work. That it is written in Italian is notable in itself. His family had moved to Italy for a few years in the mid-1890s and, although he was fluent, letters in Italian are seldom seen."

All photography © iStock, unless otherwise stated

SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...



### PRIEST FINED FOR NOISY BELLS

An Italian priest has been fined – because his church bells were too noisy. A complaint was registered against the church in Pramaggiore, Venezia, resulting in a fine of €1,312 for Monsignor Giuseppe Gianotto, who is the legal representative for the church. "[The complainant] was probably a citizen who only settled in the village a short while ago," he told a newspaper. "To control the problem and not run into more hefty fines, I've limited the duration of the sound of the bells, which in the centuries-old tradition lasted a few minutes." Parishioners have voiced their support for the priest, who is believed to be appealing against the fine.

### WRINKLY ROBBERS

In an incident that could've been lifted straight out of a Quentin Tarantino movie plot, a group of toy gun-wielding pensioners on bicycles recently robbed a chemist in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia. After plundering the store, the OAPs pedalled away, before ditching their bikes and scarpering in a getaway car – a plan that is believed to have been hatched in the robbers' retirement home. However, it wasn't long before the police apprehended the gang, and now the authorities are investigating whether the pensioners were behind a string of other unsolved crimes in the area.



**KATY LABELL**  
**ITALIAN S**  
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Photograph © PA Photos

Katy Perry is no stranger to controversy, and she caused a storm on Twitter recently by publishing a series of “tasteless” selfies taken at some of Italy’s most famous landmarks. The US singer, who had a hit single with *I Kissed A Girl*, was seen in one photo apparently pretending to perform a sex act on the Leaning Tower of Pisa; while in another, she stood next to Michelangelo’s sculpture of David at the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence, her attention seemingly fixed on his genital area. The photographs were heavily criticised on social media, with one observer writing, “So childish. Katy is an embarrassment.” Perry – who is set to perform dates across Europe in the upcoming weeks – moved quickly to quell the storm by professing her love for Italy. In a tweet, she said that Italy “was one of the most magical places we’ve ever been, and now takes a spot in my top 5 fav places ever!”



A mayor of an Italian town has been forced to make an apology after a photograph of a prominent Nazi appeared in its tourism brochure. The booklet, promoting Cosenza in the southern Calabria region, featured a detailed history of the town, and explained that a 5th-century king, Alaric I, was believed to have died there. It then revealed that Heinrich Himmler, who was second in command to Adolf Hitler and one of the masterminds of the Holocaust, later deployed archaeologists to search for Alaric's tomb. But the inclusion of Himmler's picture drew angry criticism, forcing Cozenza authorities to remove it. Mayor Mario Occhiuto admitted that the photograph was "inappropriate" but insisted it was an "unintentional mistake". "In any case, I have already taken on the responsibility of what happened and I have offered my apologies," he added on Facebook.

Three Italian skiers have been killed by an avalanche in the Swiss Alps. The two women and one man were part of a five-strong group who were cross-country skiing in an area known as Death Valley near the Italian border when the avalanche struck at an altitude of 2,300 metres. The subsequent rescue attempt managed to locate the skiers – some of them buried under two and a half metres of snow – thanks to the avalanche-victim detectors they were carrying. They were airlifted to hospital but while two of the men escaped with injuries, the other three skiers were pronounced dead. Avalanches have now claimed the lives of at least 24 people in the Swiss Alps this winter season.

It's a common complaint with holidaymakers that "the holiday was great but the food was awful". But that certainly won't be the case on Ecco La Cucina's week-long culinary tour of Naples, Campania and the Amalfi Coast. Due to take place in late summer, the tour will celebrate the excellent cuisine that the region has to offer: you'll learn how to make pizza at an authentic pizzaiolo, sample freshly produced mozzarella and taste fine wines on the slopes of Mt Vesuvius - and there will still be time left to absorb the incredible history of this iconic region. For more information, visit [www.eccolacucina.com](http://www.eccolacucina.com)





Fish and chips are about as British as they come, right? Well, not according to Rome city council, which is teaching schoolchildren what it believes are the true origins of some of Europe's most famous national dishes. When it comes to fish and chips, the council cites Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, and suggests that Venetian immigrants may have brought the dish to Britain. However, Andrew Crook, treasurer of the National Federation of Fish Friers, is taking the claim with a pinch of salt (and probably a splash of vinegar), saying, "I have never heard anything about the Italians bringing over fish and chips. All the history books say it was either the Malins [of London] or the Lees [of Mossley, near Manchester]." As part of the project, the council has also explored the origins of the croque-monsieur from France and the Wiener schnitzel from Austria.



*When it comes to fish and chips, Rome city council cites Charles Dickens' novel Oliver Twist, and suggests that Venetian immigrants may have brought the dish to Britain*

A row has erupted over perceived damage to a series of medieval frescoes at the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. After important maintenance work was carried out by leading restorer Sergio Fusetti and his team, Bruno Zanardi, a lecturer at the University of Urbino, claimed that he noticed significant changes in the chapel, which houses works by the likes of Giotto and Pietro Lorenzetti. Suggesting that unnatural colour alterations had been made, Zanardi told the *La Repubblica* newspaper. “I saw the site in 2011, and got the impression it was a good job, executed by someone I thought was a capable and expert restorer. But when I went back to the Basilica a couple of months ago with my students, I had a very different impression.” However, Fusetti disputed the claims, insisting, “I’ve worked there for 40 years. I arrive in the morning and leave in the evening. It’s like my home.”

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Driving a Ferrari around Tuscany must be high up on most people's bucket lists, and there's no time like the present to experience it. Tuscan Secrets is offering a package that includes a stay at the spectacular Castello di Casole (with champagne on arrival), a leisurely cruise in one of the famous sports cars through the beautiful Chianti hills to Siena, a visit to the Prada factory outlet and a meeting with a Palio di Siena jockey. The phrase "trip of a lifetime" could have been invented for it! For more information, email [sales@tuscansecrets.com](mailto:sales@tuscansecrets.com) or call 01344 627586.

Italian film fans were up in arms after one of the country's greatest ever directors was snubbed at the recent Oscars ceremony. Francesco Rosi, whose film *Christ Stopped At Eboli* scooped a 1983 British Academy Award and who influenced the likes of Martin Scorsese, died in January, but his name was omitted from the "in memoriam" tribute that honours those movie luminaries who have passed away in recent months. Rosi was in good company – comedian Joan Rivers was also left off the list. Both names were hastily added to a list of "in memoriam" photographs on the official Oscars website.



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# ITALIA!'S *Top picks*

Our favourite **Italian products** for April. Including some TV to catch up on, some cheese to make, and some cards to play...

## PLAY BRIDGE, WILL TRAVEL ►

There's something decidedly quaint about the idea of playing bridge on a long train journey through the Italian countryside – and this beautiful set by D.A. Egerton is the perfect way to do it. Bound in embossed Italian leather, it features a twin set of bridge playing cards (with a choice of four backs), four pencils and a pad for scoring. Now all we have to do is learn how to play bridge! £47 from [www.thetravellingsouk.com](http://www.thetravellingsouk.com)



**PLAY THIS!**

## WATCH THIS!



### ▲ DA VINCI'S DEMONS

If you've enjoyed TV series like *Rome* and *Casanova*, you'll love David S Goyer's historical drama *Da Vinci's Demons*. Tom Riley plays Da Vinci, who finds himself caught up in the machinations of the papacy and the Medici family. Series two is out on DVD on 13 April, so if you haven't watched series one yet, you'd best get a move on!

## EAT THIS!



### PANETTONE ALLA GIANDUJA

Who said spots were bad? They're certainly not in the case of this rather yummy-looking Panettone alla Gianduja from Gilber, a family-run artisan producer based in northern Italy. Not only is it covered in hazelnut chocolate, it's also baked with lumps of creamy chocolate in the cake itself, which melt to make a delicious goo. And even better, you can get one for half price (just £9.99) from [www.justsoitalian.co.uk](http://www.justsoitalian.co.uk). Go on, treat yourself – your diet can wait for another day.

TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...

## *Top 3 Italian* EXPERIENCES

Treat yourself and your loved ones to a sample of authentic Italy with one of these **fabulously inspirational packages...**

### 1 DO FLORENCE IN STYLE

You could spend a lifetime visiting Florence and always find new things to do, so planning a city break there can be a headache. You could, of course, take the pressure off and book yourself a 'concert and dinner' package, courtesy of [www.dosomethingdifferent.com](http://www.dosomethingdifferent.com). For £41 a head (£21 for kids), you'll get a four-course candlelit Tuscan dinner in a typical Florentine tavern, before taking your front-row seats for an opera performance in the historical St Mark's Anglican Church.







## BOMBETTA IS JUST SO ITALIAN

Fancy a tasty new topping on your bruschetta? Try some bombetta, a fiery mixture of Calabrian chilli peppers, mushrooms, aubergines, artichokes and sun-dried tomatoes. It can also be added to pasta, meat or fish, or stirred through a risotto – but if you have guests over for dinner, it might be best to warn them first, as it's called bombetta for a reason! £3.85 for 90g, from [www.justsoitalian.co.uk](http://www.justsoitalian.co.uk)

## KUHN RIKON KITCHEN KNIVES

No serious chef is without a good set of knives, and they don't come much more impressive than the latest version of Kuhn Rikon's popular Colori paring knife. As with previous versions, the blade is made from Japanese carbon steel with a non-stick coating to allow for greater speed and efficiency when chopping food. But the new incarnation comes with a longer, ergonomic secure-grip handle for ease of use. Available with a straight or serrated edge, the knife comes in a range of colours to suit all kitchens. £4.95 from [www.kuhnrikon.com](http://www.kuhnrikon.com)

USE THESE!

## HOUSE OF FRASER TROMPE L'OEIL DOOR HANGING

Do you live in a one-bedroom flat in the Outer Hebrides and fancy a little Mediterranean escapism in your humble home? Well, this clever trompe l'oeil door hanging, available at House of Fraser, could be just the ticket. Suitable for most standard door sizes, it captures the very essence of a quaint Italian town, all colourful stone architecture, antiquated street lamps and rickety cobbled steps. Just warn your guests when they arrive and do be careful you don't forget you bought it and try to climb up them – it's only a picture! £14.99 from [www.houseoffraser.co.uk](http://www.houseoffraser.co.uk)



## ITALIAN CHEESE-MAKING KIT

We've heard of "cheesy" presents, but this one really takes the biscuit! It's an Italian cheese-making kit and comes with all the ingredients and equipment necessary to create mozzarella, ricotta, mascarpone and more – a total of 6kg of cheese! Of course, you don't have to buy it as a present – you could rustle up the cheese and then serve it to your dinner guests. Imagine the look on their faces when you tell them you made the cheese yourself! £19.99 from [www.presentsformen.co.uk](http://www.presentsformen.co.uk)

TRY THIS!



# TOP 3... THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS

## 2 BE IN THE ITALIAN JOB

The scene in which three Minis race around Turin in the 1969 film classic *The Italian Job* is one of the most iconic ever committed to celluloid. And now you can recreate it with a thrilling *Italian Job*-themed tour of London, courtesy of Red Letter Days. You'll be chauffeured around the capital in a Mini Cooper, gold stashed in the boot and a '60s soundtrack on the stereo, visiting the city's most famous landmarks and discovering its secrets. The only thing missing will be Michael Caine! £113 for two people (third passenger goes free), [www.redletterdays.co.uk](http://www.redletterdays.co.uk)



## 3 GO TO THE OPERA AT CARLUCCIO'S

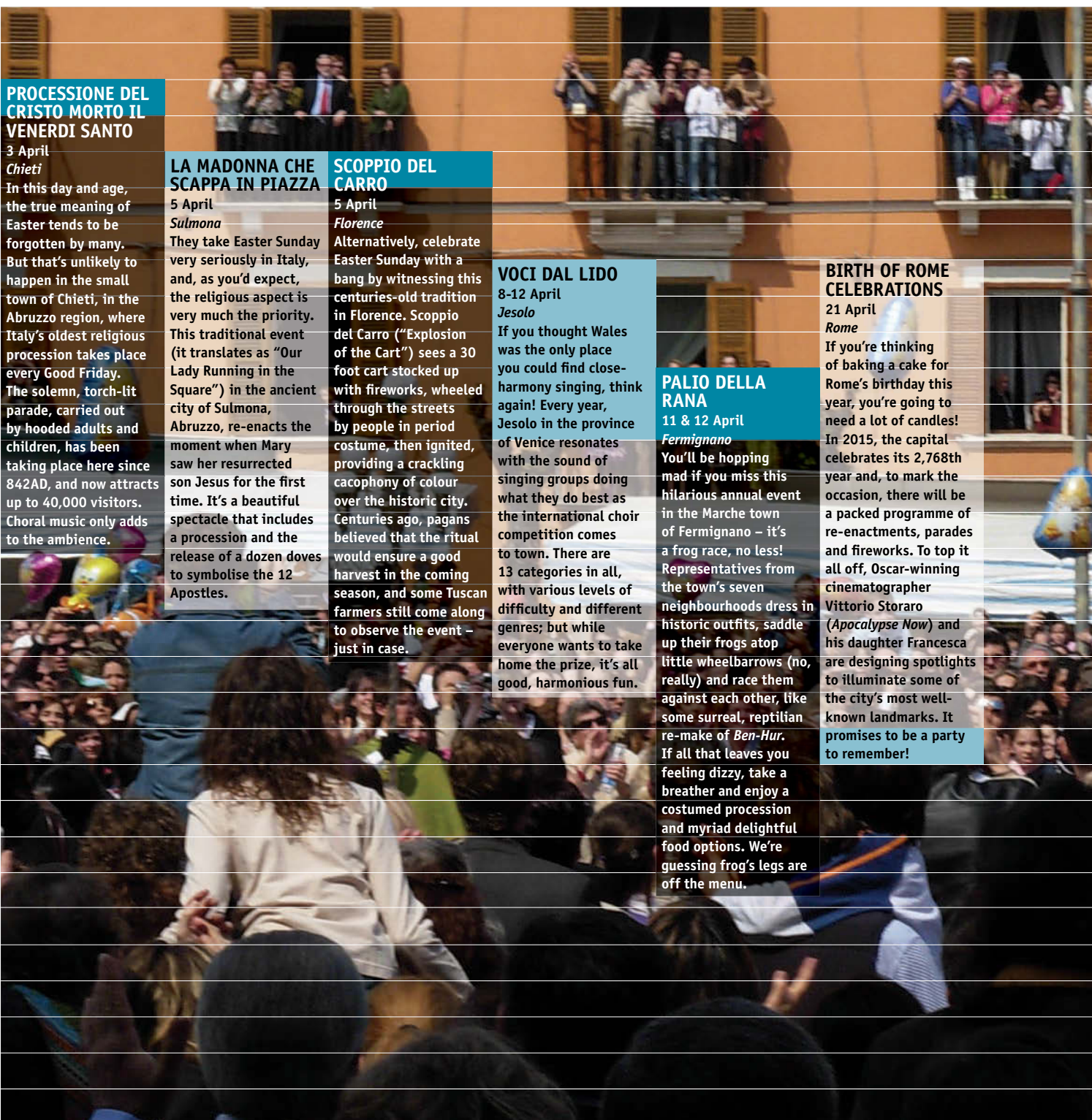
You've got to applaud Carluccio's for its commitment to providing the authentic Italian dining experience – and now it's going the extra mile with a series of opera evenings in its restaurants. After being greeted with prosecco and canapés, guests are treated to a three-course supper while being serenaded with well-loved arias and other classic operatic pieces by a vocal ensemble. The events continue until September and cost £40 per head (excluding drinks), [www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)





# EVENTS IN APRIL 2015

As winter yields to spring, we bring you **traditional Easter celebrations** as well as close-harmony singing, Rome's birthday party, Liberation Day and, erm, racing frogs. You think we're joking? Read on...



## PROCESSIONE DEL CRISTO MORTO IL VENERDI SANTO

3 April  
*Chieti*

In this day and age, the true meaning of Easter tends to be forgotten by many. But that's unlikely to happen in the small town of Chieti, in the Abruzzo region, where Italy's oldest religious procession takes place every Good Friday. The solemn, torch-lit parade, carried out by hooded adults and children, has been taking place here since 842AD, and now attracts up to 40,000 visitors. Choral music only adds to the ambience.

## LA MADONNA CHE SCAPPA IN PIAZZA

5 April  
*Sulmona*

They take Easter Sunday very seriously in Italy, and, as you'd expect, the religious aspect is very much the priority. This traditional event (it translates as "Our Lady Running in the Square") in the ancient city of Sulmona, Abruzzo, re-enacts the moment when Mary saw her resurrected son Jesus for the first time. It's a beautiful spectacle that includes a procession and the release of a dozen doves to symbolise the 12 Apostles.

## SCOPPIO DEL CARRO

5 April  
*Florence*

Alternatively, celebrate Easter Sunday with a bang by witnessing this centuries-old tradition in Florence. Scoppio del Carro ("Explosion of the Cart") sees a 30 foot cart stocked up with fireworks, wheeled through the streets by people in period costume, then ignited, providing a crackling cacophony of colour over the historic city. Centuries ago, pagans believed that the ritual would ensure a good harvest in the coming season, and some Tuscan farmers still come along to observe the event – just in case.

## VOCI DAL LIDO

8-12 April  
*Jesolo*

If you thought Wales was the only place you could find close-harmony singing, think again! Every year, Jesolo in the province of Venice resonates with the sound of singing groups doing what they do best as the international choir competition comes to town. There are 13 categories in all, with various levels of difficulty and different genres; but while everyone wants to take home the prize, it's all good, harmonious fun.

## PALIO DELLA RANA

11 & 12 April  
*Fermignano*

You'll be hopping mad if you miss this hilarious annual event in the Marche town of Fermignano – it's a frog race, no less! Representatives from the town's seven neighbourhoods dress in historic outfits, saddle up their frogs atop little wheelbarrows (no, really) and race them against each other, like some surreal, reptilian re-make of *Ben-Hur*. If all that leaves you feeling dizzy, take a breather and enjoy a costumed procession and myriad delightful food options. We're guessing frog's legs are off the menu.

## BIRTH OF ROME CELEBRATIONS

21 April  
*Rome*

If you're thinking of baking a cake for Rome's birthday this year, you're going to need a lot of candles! In 2015, the capital celebrates its 2,768th year and, to mark the occasion, there will be a packed programme of re-enactments, parades and fireworks. To top it all off, Oscar-winning cinematographer Vittorio Storaro (*Apocalypse Now*) and his daughter Francesca are designing spotlights to illuminate some of the city's most well-known landmarks. It promises to be a party to remember!



La Madonna che  
Scappa in Piazza

Photograph © Wikimedia Commons/  
Nicola Vinciguerra

## SAINT GEORGE'S DAY

23 April  
*Caresana*

Saint George's Day celebrations in Italy? But surely Saint George is as English as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding? Well, yes, he is the patron saint of England (even if he was born in the Middle East), but he is also the patron saint of farm workers, which is why certain areas of Italy honour the anniversary of his death in 303AD. For a particularly enjoyable spectacle, head to Caresana in the Piedmont region, where every year they celebrate with the Palio dei Buoi, a parade of floats pulled by oxen.

## CORSA ALL'ANELLO

24 April – 10 May  
*Narni*

No, "the Race of the Ring" has nothing to do with Frodo Baggins and his diminutive friends, but this 17-day long event in Narni, Umbria – dating back to the 14th century – is no less entertaining. Central to proceedings is the race itself, which sees knights galloping with long poles, trying to pierce a silver ring that hangs between two ropes. But that's just the tip of the iceberg, and there's a rich programme of events including a costumed parade and a food festival.

## LIBERATION DAY

25 April  
*National holiday*

This annual festival – a national holiday – commemorates Italy's liberation from Nazi occupation in 1945, and the event takes on extra resonance this year as it's the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Many towns and cities across the country mark the occasion with festivals and concerts, and in Rome there will be special ceremonies at the Quirinale Palace and other state venues in the city.

## FESTA DI SAN MARCO

25 April  
*Venice*

The patron saint of Venice, Saint Mark, is honoured at this annual extravaganza in and around the city. As you might expect, many of the festivities are centred around Saint Mark's Square, but there is also a colourful gondoliers' regatta and commemorations inside Saint Mark's Basilica. Traditionally, men give their wives, girlfriends and even mothers the *bocolo* (bloom of the red rose) on this day – so expect there to be a lovely scent in the air!

## SAN BIAGIO DAY

28 April  
*Avetrana*

You've probably never heard of Avetrana, never mind been there, but this historic town in Puglia comes alive on 28 April every year, in celebration of its patron saint, San Biagio. Against the backdrop of the 13th-century castle ruins, there's a religious procession, marching bands, festival illuminations, chefs serving up delicious street food and much more. If you've got any time left after all that, drop by the photogenic, 17th-century Palazzo Imperiale for a taste of Italian architecture at its best.

## NOTTE BIANCA

30 April  
*Florence*

For some people, the best way to enjoy Florence is by sipping a Bellini while enjoying the view from the Piazzale Michelangelo. For others, it's by browsing the wonderful museums and art galleries. If you fit into the latter category, be in town for Notte Bianca (White Night) on 30 April, when many of the cultural sights open at night with free admission. There is also a programme of concerts and other events.

Please note that the dates of all events are subject to change. If you plan to attend, check events are going ahead before you travel. All attempts are made to present the correct details.








# VIEWPOINT

The **Madonna della Bruna** is the protector of Matera in Basilicata. Her feast day is the 2nd of July, when she is brought from the Church of San Francesco and presented to the people...

In northern climes, we tend to reserve our illuminations and fireworks for the winter months, when we are glad for the light and illusion of heat. In southern Europe, in contrast, winters are balmy and short – they can pass almost without notice. Summer days, however, can be oppressively hot, and many communities tend to be socially active in the evenings. In Matera, in the days leading up to the Festa della Bruna, the upper part of town is ornamentally lit at night and, as they say, 'nobody sleeps'. There is food, wine and music, and entertainments for the children. Then, early on the morning of the 2nd, the town is awoken by a fireworks display and the events of the Madonna's big day begin.







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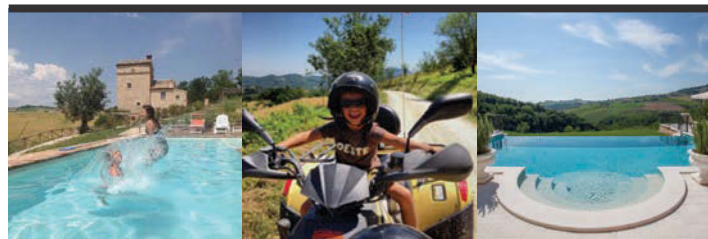
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# LETTERS TO ITALIA!

Share your Italian experiences with us by sending your photos and letters to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com) – you'll receive a gourmet gift voucher if you're chosen as our Letter of the Month winner...



*Brescia is an unsung destination, but well worth visiting if you are in the area.*

## READER'S PHOTO

Having recently returned from spending Christmas in Verona I collected my December edition of *Italia!* magazine from the letterbox to turned the page to find my photo of Camogli prominently displayed.

What a thrill! I enjoy your magazine and the information it has to offer when we plan our yearly trip to some corner of Italy.

Our trip last September took us to the Le Marche region for a time, visiting with friends in the little village of Osimo. What a find that was, together with day trips to Recanati and Loreto. It would be great if you could include little villages in your magazine as I am sure your readers are also interested in the much small villages outside the larger cities. If you need any photos, I have plenty.

**Sue Perry, Victoria, Australia**

*Sue's beautiful photo of Camogli*



Our letter of the month (when based in the UK) will win a £25 voucher to spend at [www.delicibo.com](http://www.delicibo.com), recently launched to complement the Chesterfield-based Calabria Cucina & Delicibo Deli. [delicibo.com](http://delicibo.com) provides a wide range of artisan Italian food and drink items for your enjoyment at home.

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MONTH LETTER OF THE  
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## TRANSLATIONS FOR TOURISTS

I've recently discovered *Italia!* magazine and I'm so impressed with it that I've subscribed. The contents are just right but I'd like to see some Italian to English translations that would be beneficial in a tourist capacity.

Many thanks,

**Judith McManus, via email**

*Thank you, Judith – we hope you enjoy your subscription.*

*We intend to launch a new series of features detailing useful English to Italian phrases in the very near future.*

## WHO'S LISA?

Just got the March copy of *Italia!*. Started reading the Letters page Letter of the Month and what excitement! It was my letter about life in Calabria! Excitement was short-lived however, as when I got to the end I noted it was attributed to a Lisa Baker, via email! I don't know who Lisa is but I wrote the letter.

**Anne Chieruzzi, via email**

*Our apologies, Anne – please accept our printing of your correction.*

## SANTA GIULIA MUSEUM

In September we spent a most enjoyable week sightseeing from our base in the town of Garda. A friend had visited Brescia earlier in the year and recommended we explored the historical centre. I was given tourist information which included details on the City Museum, Santa Giulia. That whetted our appetites so we set aside our Sunday for the short train ride from Peschiera to Brescia.

The museum is a little way out of the centre and a walk to the railway station. We only had two hours because of the Sunday train timetable and that is not enough!

The Museum is housed in an old nunnery founded in AD753. Roman villas were discovered in a dig in what was the orchard of the nunnery and the mosaics are on display.

There are two itineraries. One is dedicated to the nunnery's history: San Salvatore, Santa Maria in Solario, the Nun's Choir, the Church of Santa Giulia and the Cloisters. The second presents objects and works of art from the city, ranging from pre-history to the 19th century.

Highlights include the frescoes in the Nun's Choir (The Martinengo Mausoleum) and the Cross of Desiderius (founder of the

nunnery) set with gems and ivory. Aphrodite-Victory, 1st century AD, is magnificent as are the portraits of emperors from the 2nd and 3rd century. Not to be missed is the engraved slab with a peacock.

It was at that point the train was calling and we had to leave. We had to tear ourselves away! As we always say in Italy: "We can see the remainder next time we come!"

One last, important point though – we struggled to find transport to reach the station, so if you have to walk there, leave sufficient time: we ended up running, out of breath, for our train – which then happened to be late anyway, so actually we could have stayed longer in the museum!

**Catherine Crehan, Rotherham**

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# Homes on Italy's Islands

Italy is blessed with some of the most beautiful islands in Europe. From the biggies, Sicily and Sardinia, down to tiny gems such as Capri and Pantelleria, every kind of Mediterranean idyll is here. Island property makes a great investment, says **Fleur Kinson**...

**T**here's something naturally romantic about an island. It's an intimate place – a tiny world unto itself, cut off from mainland concerns. For all the boats and ferries that may ply the waters between an island and its mainland, there's always a sense of escape and retreat when you go to an island. You feel delightfully out of reach here. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why so many holiday dreams involve islands. On these little sea-girt worlds, workaday worries seem less able to track you down. You're free to relax in splendid isolation.

Islands are potent places with strong identities. They're concentrated spots where local life and culture has evolved in its own way. Islands may have unique wildlife, a distinctive micro-climate, an unusual dialect or unprecedented local customs. All these things heighten their sense of specialness. Furthermore, because travelling to an island has for a long time been a slightly more complicated enterprise than reaching a mainland destination, islands have developed an 'exclusive' reputation. Even now, when the largest Italian islands of Sardinia, Sicily and Elba can all be reached by direct flights from the UK, making them every bit as accessible as mainland destinations, their aura of discerning luxuriousness lingers. You

might no longer need your own yacht to get here, but there are still some on the island who have arrived that way. True island aficionados, of course, don't care a fig about flights or ease of access. For them, the complicated journey and the messing about in boats or on ferries only enhances islands' appeal.

## WIDE CHOICE, WISE CHOICE

Without a doubt, many of Italy's islands are among the most beautiful places in Europe. Heavenly beaches, unspoilt natural landscapes, lovely towns – and all graced with that friendly, invigorating Italian culture we love so much. From the large to the small, from the crowded to the deserted, each of Italy's islands has special appeal. But how to choose the one you want?

You may already be familiar with Sardinia and Sicily, even with Capri and the other Bay of Naples islands, not to mention the myriad islands of the Venetian lagoon, but how well do you know, say, the Tuscan Archipelago (which includes Elba and Giglio), the Pontine Islands off the coast of Lazio, the Tremiti Islands off the coast of Puglia, or the many delicious islands and clusters of islands that lie dotted in the sea around Sicily – islands like the Aeolians, the Egadi, the Pelagie and little Pantelleria? ➤

*Pantelleria can be reached  
by ferry from Trapani*







*Cefalù lies near the centre of  
Sicily's Tyrrhenian Coast*





## LA MADDALENA

Type of property **Apartment**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **£450,000**

Location **La Maddalena, Sardinia**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd. [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)**

☎ **01322 660988**

This elegant and spacious apartment situated on La Maddalena, an island off the north-east coast of Sardinia, a few minutes' walk from both the town and the sea front. The property offers 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, lounge and open-plan kitchen; balcony with tables and chairs for al fresco dining with wonderful sea views, car parking and a storage area. The apartment is a short walk from the centre of the thriving La Maddalena town, complete with boutique shops, bars and restaurants serving delicious local cuisine. Take a short bike or car trip over a causeway to the neighbouring island of Caprera, where the Italian revolutionary Garibaldi spent his last days, and which is now a national park, home to diverse species of seabird. Garibaldi's home and gardens are open to the public along with a maritime museum. Boat tours are a must in order to see the islands in all their glory, or perhaps to see the dolphins which are often present in these waters. The island is a 10-minute boat ride from Palau, and Olbia airport is just 45 minutes from Palau, with a choice of both scheduled and budget airlines. The property would be ideal for rental. This chance to purchase an elegant apartment by the sea on La Maddalena does not appear very often.



*The Tremiti Islands constitute an archipelago in the Adriatic Sea*

Whichever island you're considering, you should be aware that homes on Italian islands are considered a very good investment. Island destinations are always in demand, so holiday rental prospects – and resale values – are strong.

room for negotiation on price than there was pre-recession. This is especially true on Sicily, where an Arabic-influenced haggling culture has always been something enjoyed and expected by the locals. Fabrizio Vitellino of the agency Buy in Sicily

*Restrictions on new building mean that most islands are protected from over-development*

Furthermore, far-sighted restrictions on new building mean that most islands are well-protected from over-development. This preserves their charm and character, as well as safeguards the value of properties. Prices can be high on some Italian islands, especially the small ones, and sometimes there's very little on the market since no one wants to give up their precious island idyll. But on the largest islands you won't struggle to find affordable property, especially if you look slightly inland. You might be able to get a nicely-situated village home just half an hour from the sea for as little as €30,000, for example.

The recent recession hasn't failed to have an effect on property prices on Italy's islands. While super-expensive spots such as Capri haven't seen much change in its prices, the more affordable islands have seen some reduction – especially for mid-to-lower-priced homes (say, anything up to about €300,000). There's also a lot more

advises would-be buyers not to panic when they look at asking prices on Sicily, because these are so subject to negotiation. All in all, what's clear is that right now is an excellent time to buy on many Italian islands – with prices lower than they've been

*Ponza is the largest of the Pontine Islands archipelago*





for years, and the property markets beginning to show signs of recovery.

### AIM BIG

By a long way, Sardinia and Sicily are Italy's two largest islands. As well as being the two most directly accessible, they also offer the widest range of properties and prices. So it's worthwhile focussing the majority of our attention here on them.

Both islands have strong and distinct identities, and each displays an intoxicating mix of cultural influences thanks to the many trading and invading groups that have swept in over the centuries. Both have jaw-droppingly beautiful beaches and landscapes, and sensuous climates. While both islands are extremely friendly and welcoming, it might be fair to say that Sardinians are generally considered to be a quieter, gentler and more reserved kind of people, while the Sicilians are more known for being demonstrative and charmingly voluble.

Sardinia is little short of enchanting. It has truly astonishing natural beauty and remains marvellously clean and unspoilt, with a rich array of indigenous plants and animals. The landscapes here can be dazzling – talc-white beaches lapped by vivid turquoise water, olive groves sprouting from paprika-red soil, sun-blonded fields rolling toward rounded hills, pinewoods rising from ➤



*Meredith Balham enjoys her Sardinian property five times a year*

Photograph © Meredith Balham

## MY ISLAND LIFE

Cambridge-based Meredith Balham owns a small house in a village a dozen miles from Castelsardo on Sardinia's northern coast. She visits the property about five times a year – always spending a month there in the summer and a fortnight over Christmas. Meredith keeps the house available for friends and family, and also offers holiday lets.

What drew her to Italy, and to Sardinia in particular? “My first-ever trip to Italy was to Sardinia,” she explains. “It was the early 1980s and I was studying archaeology at university. I’d become quite fascinated by the ancient Nuraghic civilisation on Sardinia, and I managed to cadge a college grant to come out and visit some sites. Sardinia was relatively difficult to reach back then. It was long before the budget airlines started their routes from the UK. The complicated journey out made Sardinia seem even more exotic. I was totally wowed by the place. So beautiful, so clean and wild. And I got my first taste of the legendary Italian friendliness and wonderful way of life. I realised that I was going to fall in love with Italy, and I did. I visited many other parts of the country over the following years, and became truly smitten.

“When I turned 50 a couple of years ago, I thought I had to mark the occasion with something really big. So I finally bought a little house on my favourite island in the world. I had been thinking about doing it for a long time. I was incredibly lucky because thanks to the recession the property prices on Sardinia were quite down on what they had been. So I got what seemed a great deal. Apparently I also benefitted from buying inland. I didn’t want to be right on the coast in case it became too crowded in the summer. I loved the idea of a rural retreat. But I didn’t want to be too isolated, so I bought on the edge of a little village. It was perfect for me, and perfect for my budget, because most people are looking for villas on the coast or farmhouses with land.

“The house was habitable when I bought it, but I did some modernising internally. There are two bedrooms, a large kitchen, small bathroom, a living room with a tiny fireplace, and a wonderful little roof terrace where I take all my meals in the summer. I can’t see the sea from up there, but I can admire the rolling fields outside the village. There’s even the ruin of an old nuraghe in the distance! It’s a constant reminder of why I found Sardinia in the first place. I love it, and it’s the first thing I look to when I go up there.”





## RENA MAIORE

Type of property **Villa**

Number of bedrooms **4**

Price **€350,000**

Location **Rena Maiore, Sardinia**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd. [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)**

☎ **01322 660988**

This newly-built 4-bedroom villa is close to Rena Maiore on the northern coast of Sardinia, with magnificent views over the sea and within 1 hour of both Olbia and Alghero airports. The spacious property provides accommodation over 2 floors as follows: Lower floor: 2 bedrooms, bathroom. Ground floor: Large living room with corner kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom and covered veranda. The property, which has been excellently finished, sits in 400sqm of garden with lovely sea views, includes 2 parking spaces and is ready for central heating installation to be completed.



## ISOLA ROSSA

Type of property **Apartment**

Number of bedrooms **2**

Price **€220,000**

Location **Isola Rossa, Sardinia**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd. [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)**

☎ **01322 660988**

This lovely 2-bedroom apartment is located just 70 metres from the beach at Isola Rossa on the northern coast of Sardinia, and less than an hour from either Olbia and Alghero airports. The apartment provides spacious accommodation consisting of living room, kitchenette, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a spacious covered veranda with room to eat outdoors. The property also benefits from a garage, is close to all amenities, and just 70 metres from the beach and the harbour. An ideal property close to amenities and excellent for personal use or to provide rental income.



*The town of Bosa lies on Sardinia's west coast*

herbal-scented underbrush... It's swoonworthy stuff. And the island's visitors tend to be the respectful, discerning kind who appreciate such riches and don't wish to see them sullied with tat.

There really are property prices on Sardinia to suit every budget. A village home half an hour from the coast, as mentioned earlier, might ask as little as €30,000. For €80,000, you might get a nice one-bedroom apartment in a family-friendly beach resort or a two- to three-bedroom village house a few miles inland. €150,000 could buy a two-bedroom seaside apartment or semi-detached house. €300,000 or more gives you a

for-money homes in rural areas.

Mauro highlights the areas around Aglientu, Telti and Luogosanto, which are "very attractive, relatively close to a stunning coastline and within easy reach of Olbia airport." Meanwhile, David Howlett of the agency Come to Sardinia flags up the area around Bosa on the west coast. "Here," he says, "there is a wide variety of good properties at very attractive prices."

Both agents unhesitatingly recommend restoring an old property on Sardinia if that's what you long to do. "Buying a project," David says, "is still a good way to get what you want on a budget. The last few years have seen builders

*Sardinia has truly astonishing natural beauty and remains marvellously clean and unspoilt*

wide choice of villas near the sea. And if you're looking to spend seven figures (lucky you), there are abundant luxury options on the island. Holiday rental prospects are very good, and as new building on Sardinia is subject to strict limits, the value of any home here is very safe indeed.

## TELL ME MORE

Mauro Demuro of the agency Live in Sardinia particularly recommends rural property on Sardinia. The island's countryside is glorious, and there are excellent value-

struggling to find enough work, so their prices are very competitive at the moment."

Sardinia's neighbour to the south, Sicily, is the Mediterranean's largest and most populous island. Loud and colourful, it brings together Greek temples, Norman cathedrals, Arab-influenced cuisine, long white beaches, fruit-clad hills, craggy mountains, windswept offshore islets and two entertainingly fiery but harmless volcanoes – Etna and Stromboli. Sicily has long been loved by northern Italian homebuyers, but foreign buyers ➤



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## 'My villa in Sardinia...'

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If you are one of those dreamers and are ready to start living your dream, contact us for the best personalized assistance you could possibly get in buying a villa in Sardinia.

*Angela Fanunza*

**My villa in Sardinia**

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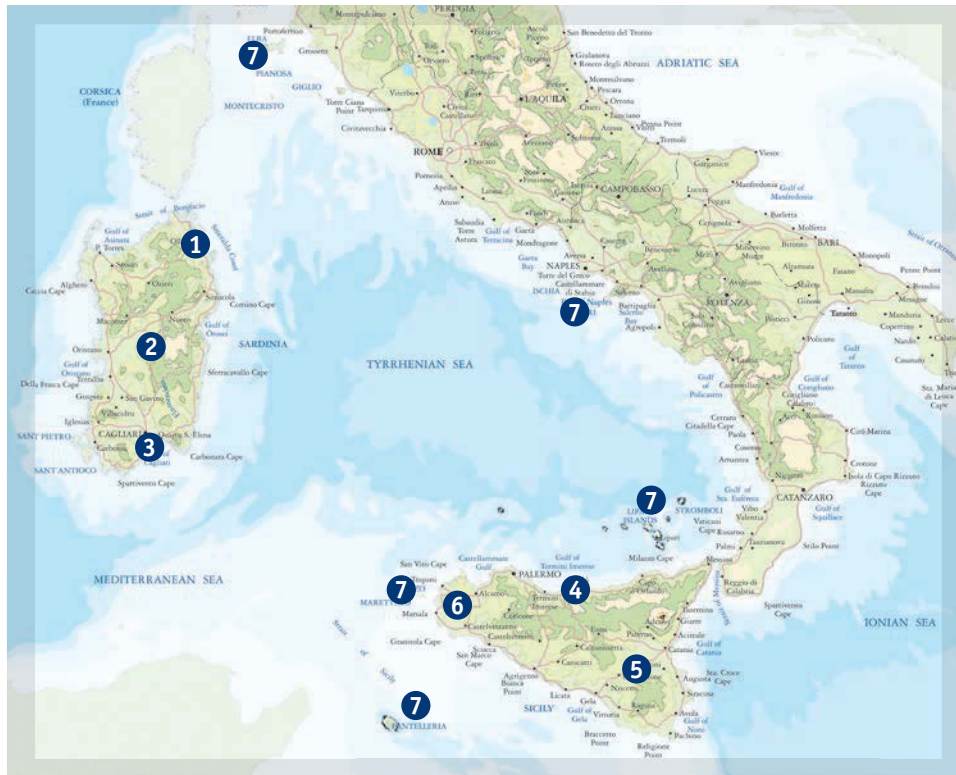


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# ITALIAN ISLANDS GUIDE



## INTRODUCTION

Sicily is the largest, most populated island in the Mediterranean. It's the southernmost of all the Italian regions and is served by airports at Palermo, Catania, Trapani and Comiso. The summers are hot and it stays pleasant through winter. There are several Blue Flag beaches, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and Etna, its famous volcano.

Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean, but is Italy's fourth least-populated region. The most densely populated areas are around the cities of Olbia, Cagliari and Alghero, with sparser settlement inland. The island's biggest draw is its sandy beaches and sapphire sea. Lovely inland scenery, the cuisine and wine, its climate, charming towns and friendly residents all contribute to its popularity. Flights run from the UK to Olbia, Alghero and Cagliari.

Other much smaller islands and island groups include Capri, Elba and the Egadi (Aegadian) Islands – all with varied property-buying prospects, from super expensive Capri to cheap and charming Favignana off Sicily's coast.

## SARDINIA: NORTH

① The Costa Smeralda is the biggest attraction in the northeast. Sardinia's tourist industry first kick-started itself with this coastline back in the 1960s as a luxurious, exclusive resort – and nothing's really changed in this respect, as the area still commands by far the highest property prices on the island, offering a glamorous lifestyle among the international jetset community. It is stunningly beautiful, with some of the island's best coastline. To find more realistic prices in the northeast, further north you'll find Santa Teresa di Gallura, and further south are San Teodoro and Budoni. Olbia itself is a busy, functional town, which hasn't so far attracted much interest from foreign buyers, but acts as a good portal for accessing other parts of the island. Inland are pleasant villages, although this area is more remote and less populated, with mountains and cork forests making up much of the terrain.

In the northwest, the main resort is Alghero, a charming town with a thriving fishing port and attractive

medieval architecture, close to pretty beaches as well as lovely countryside. There is also good rental potential here, but house prices are getting steeper by the year as Alghero's popularity grows. Stintino, a little north of Alghero, is even pricier, but it offers breathtaking beauty and is a hotspot for holiday homes. Look to Sassari, a little further inland, for slightly lower prices.

## SARDINIA: CENTRE & SOUTH

② Although there's been an increase in recent years, fewer visitors seem to spend time at Sardinia's central coast, both east and west. This is reflected in the property prices, which are lower than other coastal areas of the island. Oristano, on the west coast, is a pleasant town surrounded by wildlife-rich canals and lagoons, and there are still some good buys to be had in the smaller villages here. Inland, the rural Lake Omodeo area is picturesque and reasonable in price. Further east, you'll find the most remote, unvisited part of the island. The rugged, forested Gennargentu Mountains are a place of wild, natural beauty but villages around here are tiny, deeply traditional and not so easily accessible. Enjoy some of the island's lowest property prices here.

## SARDINIA: SOUTH

③ Sardinia's south has seen more foreign buyers in recent years, largely thanks to an increase in budget flights to Cagliari. This has meant a rise in visitor interest and holiday rentals, but it also means prices have gone up. However, it is still generally cheaper than the north of the island and there are some lovely towns here. The capital Cagliari is a likeable place where property prices are fair, and good beaches and countryside are within easy reach. Closer to the coast, southwest of Cagliari, the Costa del Sud has great beaches and lovely towns like Pula and Chia. The nearby resort of Santa Margherita is upmarket; look to the Costa Rei for good-value property in a pleasant area.



## SICILY: NORTH & NORTHEAST

④ From Palermo to Milazzo is the Tyrrhenian coast, packed with holiday resorts and beaches. The most popular is Cefalù, a seaside town with medieval streets and a long, sandy beach. Inland you'll find it less touristy with mountain villages and parks. Taormina and the northeast encompasses the Ionian coast between the Straits of Messina and Catania, and is the most popular tourist area. It is also home to Europe's largest active volcano, Etna. Taormina is Sicily's best-known resort, offering a place to stay for every budget, and it has a glamorous events such as film festivals.

## SICILY: SOUTH & CENTRE

⑤ The southeast corner of Sicily has scenic countryside, stunning beaches, and is largely unspoilt. Syracuse is an elegant, ancient city fusing Greek design and 18th-century baroque architecture. Further south is dazzling Noto, rebuilt in the early 18th century after an earthquake. Further inland, Ragusa is a charming provincial town. Its neighbour Modica has top food, stunning architecture and delicious chocolate to offer. The Riserva Naturale Oasi Faunistica di Vendicari, a protected stretch of coastal salt marshes, is a haven for rare birds.

The centre and south is a region of contrasts: the ancient landscape is mountainous in parts and reflects the agricultural and industrial endeavours that have characterized this area through the centuries. It is an area of great natural beauty with isolated towns reflecting a quieter pace of life. The UNESCO World Heritage Site at Piazza Armerina, the Villa Romana del Casale, is a magnificent Roman country residence. Further south enjoy Agrigento's Valley of the Temples.

## SICILY: WEST

⑥ Sicily's capital is also the island's largest city: exotic and bustling it is a heady mix of oriental and European influences. To the west of Palermo, the terrain is rugged and peppered with Greek ruins, and is one of the areas of Sicily most off the tourist trail.

But its tranquillity makes it a must-see area as the coastline has a lot to offer with its clear waters and tiny coves. Part of the shoreline is incorporated into the nature reserve of Zingaro. Characterful resorts dotted along the coast include Trapani, Marinella, Erice and Marsala, with great hotels and excellent food and wine on offer.

## THE REST

⑦ If you really want to escape the city crowds, a host of small islands await your attention. Capri is a fabled island nestled off the bay of Naples, resplendent with high-class, luxurious retreats and prices to match. The bay

also offers Ischia and Procida, the former a precious haven of sublime beaches and thermal springs, while the latter is less visited so a prize for those after tranquil retreats. Elba, west of Grosseto's coast, has pretty beaches and great walking in Napoleon's footsteps. North of the Sicilian coast are the Aeolians, a stunning septet of volcanic islands bursting with flora and fauna. To the island's northwest are the unspoilt trio of Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo making up the Egadi Islands and with some bargain property-buying opportunities, while to the southwest lie Lampedusa and Pantelleria – true hideaways.



*Palermo is Sicily's exotic capital, a busy and exciting place to visit and stay a while*





## VILLA LUCIA

Type of property **Villa**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€399,000**

Location **Frutti d'oro, Sardinia**

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Gorgeous beach front detached villa for sale on the southwest coast of Sardinia, half way between Cagliari and Pula. The villa has been built recently and is therefore presented in excellent conditions throughout. It has the rare benefit of direct access to a lovely white sandy beach as well as breath-taking sea views from most rooms. The villa is perfect both for all year round living, as a home away from home or as an investment. Being south facing it offers a good view of Cagliari during the day and gorgeous sunsets in the evening. At short walking distance there is a supermarket, a chemist, a bar and a patisserie.



## FRANCO

Type of property **Villas and apartments**

Number of bedrooms **2/3**

Price **€270,000**

Location **Chia, Sardinia**

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Small complex of apartments and villas currently been built with pool by the gorgeous beaches of Chia, on the southwest coast of Sardinia. The complex will be composed of 5 units in total, each on two levels and all with fantastic sea views of the azure Sardinian sea and private swimming pool. All the properties will be built according to the latest planning regulations and to a very high standard with possibility to choose some of the materials and to personalize the interior of the properties. Ready by May/June 2015.



Ragusa is Montalbano country

are a relatively new phenomenon. You can find great value-for-money on the island. For €100,000 or less, you could consider a two-bedroom apartment in a nice beach resort such as Trapani in the northwest, or a house to restore in the mountains overlooking beautiful Cefalù on the north coast. For €120,000 or more you might snap up a country villa in the fashionable southeast of the island. At the other end of the scale, there are plenty of high-end properties too. Taormina, Sicily's premier resort-town, has prices on a par with the Amalfi Coast.

Fabrizio Vitellino of Buy in Sicily notes that in the less well-known areas of Sicily, prices are

north rises steeply from the sea and a home inland here would enjoy tremendous views.

## SPOILT FOR CHOICE

Sardinia and Sicily are sizeable places, and it may be that you're looking for somewhere more bijoux, in order to have a stronger sense of being way out on an island in the middle of the sea. The good news is that the remainder of Italy's many, many islands are all quite tiny. The bad news is that you might have a hard time choosing.

The only thing to do, of course, is to visit as many as possible! Wherever you ultimately choose to buy, you can rest assured that you're

*In the less well-known areas of Sicily, prices are particularly on your side right now*

particularly on your side right now, having come down considerably since the recession. And don't forget to factor in your haggling over the asking price, something Sicilians are usually expecting you to do this. Towns such as Taormina, Ortigia or Cefalù remain pricy, but do investigate the northwest's Trapani, Trabia, Marsala and Castellammare de Golfo, plus the southeast's Pachino and the provinces of Ragusa and Siracusa. Don't overlook the island's long northern coast either, especially if you're thinking of buying a few miles inland – as the

making a good investment. Italy's islands are perennially appealing places that show no sign of wavering in visitor popularity. Beautiful, distinctive, and well-protected against over-development, Italy's islands make wonderful places to buy a home. ■

## USEFUL CONTACTS

[www.buyinsicily.com](http://www.buyinsicily.com)  
[www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)  
[www.cometosardinia.co.uk](http://www.cometosardinia.co.uk)  
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# Building the Dream

In the third instalment of her rebuild diaries, **Jane Smith** begins to add to the foundations for her new house that were laid down by the builders in last month's column...



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Smith runs one of the largest estate agencies in southern Le Marche – [www.magicmarche.com](http://www.magicmarche.com), [jane@magicmarche.com](mailto:jane@magicmarche.com). Her husband, Richard, runs a restoration management company – [www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com](http://www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com), [richard@smithprops.com](mailto:richard@smithprops.com)

**B**efore taking on this project I had never built a brand new house before and, in truth, once the breeze blocks were delivered, the next stage seemed like playing giant Lego. First we laid a roll of bitumen membrane where the perimeter walls would be built, as we were keen to avoid any chance of getting rising damp. Next, a single layer of blocks was laid to define the external walls and internal room divisions. Piles of blocks were then stacked inside each 'room' ready for the wall building. The cement mixers began whirring away and the blocks started to get cemented together.

It was extraordinary how fast the walls began to go up. Our structural engineer could not believe how fast our team of four worked and he needed to visit every three days to keep abreast of progress. Between him and my husband Richard (a qualified chartered surveyor himself) the momentum never slowed, as someone was always on hand to answer the builders' questions. We now realise what an incredible benefit this was as there are inevitably questions that arise and quick decisions must be made. As the walls went up door openings naturally appeared and we were then able to assess their position and widths in relation to each room. Compared to what we had signed off on the architect's plans, we now decided that two bedroom entrance doors needed to be amended and our team was happy to knock out a few blocks and quickly remake the entrances in the revised positions. Had we not been on site every day we would have missed this opportunity.

We were very lucky with the weather during the winter months too and our team was able to work almost unhindered throughout January and February in cold, blue-sky weather. One of the team became a father during this period, but he only took two days off at the time of the birth, and then he was back to work as normal. He told us that making use of the good weather was more important right now. (I don't know if his wife agreed with him!)

In three areas of the house we wanted to have old stone archways. Our team pride themselves on their skills with this type of traditional work. First a *forma* was built out of chipboard, which defined the shape of the arch. This was then wedged into position above the block wall at the correct height for the arch to be made. Next the team carefully selected the old bricks suitable for the arch and agreed the order in which they would use them in order to get a perfect colour blend across the arch when it was viewed from the back or the front. It was beautiful work.

Soon we were at first floor height and in order to continue upwards scaffolding was required – also a supply of Acro props for when the ceilings were made. A large lorry came clattering down the drive one morning with all this kit, then the Meccano-style assembly began. Four days later we had a scaffolding shell in place ready for building the upper floor – and it was only the end of February. It seemed that luck was on our side, so far at least! **I**





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*Paul P.*

**Paul Pettengale** Editor

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# *Italian Weddings*

Regular *Italia!* contributor **Freya Middleton** got married in Italy, and is therefore well placed to advise any who might be thinking of doing likewise...



*Generally speaking, Italian couples exchange very simple, plain gold wedding rings. Wedding dresses are mostly white and mostly long and men are in suits*



*Clockwise from top left: Parking is not usually this easy in Florence; Freya and her husband are pelted with rice; cutting the cake is as much a part of the ceremony in Italy as it is in Britain; in Italy, however, confetti are sweets, not little pieces of paper*

Italian weddings are fun, beautiful and elegant, and they always have excellent food and wine. Have I just stated the obvious? Don't all weddings aim for exactly this? Yes they do; however, weddings in Tuscany have a distinct advantage: they are located in a country with some of the greatest wine and cuisine, and some of the most beautiful countryside, in the world, littered with centuries-old palaces and country estates built by the forebears of taste and etiquette for Western Europe, and which can be rented out and enjoyed by the wedding revellers. With all of this as the stage, scenery and props, if a few things do go pear-shaped, such as bad weather, wardrobe malfunctions or some badly behaved guests, the gala occasion is possibly weathered more smoothly here than elsewhere.

The general wedding schedule isn't really much different to many other Western countries. There is a service with the exchanging of vows attended by family and friends and then a celebration. However, you would never be invited to an Italian wedding on a Friday or a Tuesday as the Italian proverb says "neither on Venus nor on Mars does one get married or depart" (*né di venere*

*né di marte non si sposa e non si parte*), and if it rains on the day it probably wouldn't dampen an Italian bride's spirits much, as it is said that a wet bride will bring good luck (*sposa bagnata, sposa fortunata*).

I have found that engagement rings are not nearly as important as in the Anglo-Saxon world and, generally speaking, Italian couples exchange very simple, plain gold wedding rings. Wedding dresses are mostly white and mostly long and men are in suits. I have always been surprised at the really quite loud chit-chat that often takes place during the solemn ceremony at weddings. On numerous occasions I have shushed my husband and frowned at his friends when I think that it seems he and his mates are getting too carried away.

### *Wedding planner*

Michelle from Mya Wedding Planning ([www.mya-wedding.com](http://www.mya-wedding.com)), a native Florentine and wedding planner by profession for both foreigners and Italians in Tuscany, says that you can tell straight away if the wedding is for an Italian couple or a foreign couple. A classic sign of an English wedding is of course the sea of hats, but she says that generally Italians are more traditional and





use the traditional colours (white, green, red) whilst foreigners will experiment more with clothing (guests and the couple alike) and decorations, both in terms of colour and style. Planning time, she said, is on average six months for a foreign wedding, but double that for an Italian couple.

If the wedding is to be a Christian ceremony, then there are two readings. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is an evergreen in Italy also. It is possible to have a mixed ceremony in a Catholic church in Italy where one person of the couple is Catholic and the other not. (However, my Kiwi mate, who married a Neapolitan in the only Protestant church in Naples, had to marry in the registry office before the ceremony in the church to make the whole thing legally binding.)

The bride and groom each choose witnesses (*testimoni*) to be at their side at the altar, normally two each, but more is possible (I had three). No matching attire is worn by the witnesses for this role. Exiting the church, it is common practice to pelt the newlyweds with rice, symbolically showering them with fortune for fertility and children. The speed and accuracy of the guests' ability to get the rice in the bride's hair

and down the dress is impressive, but it is the force with which they do it that has always amazed me. It is no genteel act. The couple have to defend themselves with their arms and bouquets from the paddies being bestowed unto them by their dearest.

### *Civil ceremonies*

I got married in an 11th-century abbey in the Casentino area of Tuscany. If you like history, beauty and art, then the choice of beautiful places for the ceremony is impressive, with churches, chapels, abbeys, palaces and parks. The 13th century town hall (Palazzo Vecchio) of Florence has the 'red room' available (*la sala rossa*) for civil wedding ceremonies. Very popular for both foreign and local couples, there is always some traffic outside the room, the next couple and their entourage ready to enter at their allocated time slot. The room is atmospheric; with heavy red drapes, dark wood and tapestries, it lends itself well to the gravity and specialness of the occasion.

Afterwards, the feasting begins. Many nowadays opt for an abundant *aperitivo* (often outside) to ease into the more formal sit-down meal. Whilst people mill around and socialise, there are often 'stations' spread around ➤



*Whilst people mill around and socialise, there are often 'stations' spread around the space, for salamis and cheese, for mise en bouches, for drinks*



*This page, clockwise from top left: The cheese station; les mises en bouches; the big moment; Botticelli's Primavera*

*Following page, clockwise from top left: A bride arrives with her father; essential paperwork; a cassone, which would have contained a dowry*

the space, for salamis and cheese, for *mises en bouches*, for drinks. The fried vegetables are a personal favourite of mine: little pieces of lightly-battered fried aubergines, or onions, courgettes, carrots or mushrooms. I never eat fried food on any other occasion but these are so good that I had a station dedicated to this at my wedding, with an individual little deep fryer for instant delight.

The dinner, often three courses, will be some type of pasta followed by a second course and finally dessert. I do love the weddings that actually have the dessert stations also. Italians don't do speeches – instead, the couple will do the rounds of the tables. Often, strangely, the couple have a table to themselves. It is customary to pay per head for the food and drinks together. Many companies will do a sample dinner with the meals and the wines a few months prior to the date and the aperitivo cost is based on how many stations are chosen. Michelle says that another telling sign of a foreign wedding is the amount of alcohol consumed, considerably more than at an Italian wedding.

Favours (*bomboniere*) are a must at an Italian wedding. Most commonly they are a bunch of white coloured sugared almonds (*confetti*) in a little pouch with the name

of the happy couple and the date. A tradition dating back to ancient Roman times, sugared almonds (the Romans covered the almonds with honey and flour, not having sugar) are given in odd numbers of three or five, and symbolise abundance and prosperity. The cost of the confetti can differ considerably. The more expensive the confetti the better quality the almond and thinner the sugar shell. I am a confetti addict and I am displeased at the increasing fashion of mixing the almond confetti with the chocolate type.

### *The honeymoon*

Finally, for many years now, Italian couples opt not to have a registry list but to set up an account with a travel agency and guests contribute to the honeymoon, all organised on the internet directly with the travel agency. I did both as our Italian guests of a certain age were not comfortable nor familiar with giving money to the agency. We set up a registry at a well stocked homewares shop. This tradition of redecorating or furnishing a home for the newlyweds is of course centuries old. Raphael's painting of *Madonna of the Goldfinch* in the Uffizi Gallery was commissioned as a gift on the





occasion of the wedding between Lorenzo Nasi and Sandra di Matteo di Giovanni Canigiani in 1506. The same is true for the famous Botticelli mythological paintings of the *Birth of Venus* and *Springtime*, both thought to be commissioned by Lorenzo the Magnificent for his younger cousin Pier Francesco di Lorenzo on the occasion of his marriage in 1482.

### *Weddings of the Renaissance*

And what was a wedding like in the Renaissance? The process differed slightly in each Italian city state. However, generally speaking, there were three main stages: the betrothal, the ring ceremony and the wedding celebration. Of course, very few alliances amongst the wealthy and influential families were love matches. They were a political, social and economical agreement between two families or clans. Lucrezia Tornabuoni chose Clarice Orsini for the wife for her eldest son, Lorenzo the Magnificent, because her family was one of the most influential and oldest families in Roman society. It was the first Medici match outside of Florence and a significant move to increase their international standing. The betrothal (*agiuramento*)

was when the families met to sign the marriage contract stipulating the daughter's dowry (money, property, jewellery) that she would bring to party and the specific marriage conditions. In turn, Lorenzo the Magnificent organised the marriage of one of his daughters, Maddelena, to the son of Pope Innocent VIII, Francesco Cybo, and through this convenient contract he managed to seal the first cardinalate for the Medici family. Lorenzo's son, Giovanni was made cardinal at 13 by Pope Innocent VIII – that would have cost him quite a sum. Marriage has been big business and high stakes since time immemorial. In Florence in 1425, and then later elsewhere in Italy, the dowry bank (*Monte delle doti*) was created, where parents would make steady deposits over the years, accruing interest, to ensure a sizeable sum when the daughter was of marriageable age, usually from 14 years old. Wealthy merchants would also donate dowries to poor girls as an act of piety.

The ring ceremony made the alliance public. The exchange of rings happened at the bride's home. Diamond was a common stone used and the ring finger on the right hand seems to be the finger of choice, only to change hands after the Reformation. The ➤



*After the ring ceremony, the bride would bring many new items to the new house including cassoni – carved wooden chests*



## USEFUL CONTACTS

**Charisma Italy LTD** [www.charismaitaly.com](http://www.charismaitaly.com)

**Creative Weddings** [www.creativewedding.co.uk](http://www.creativewedding.co.uk)

**Ionian Weddings** [www.ionianweddings.co.uk](http://www.ionianweddings.co.uk)

**Weddings in Rome** [www.weddingsinrome.com](http://www.weddingsinrome.com)

**Mya Wedding Planning** [www.myawedding.com](http://www.myawedding.com)

use of the 'ring finger' for the wedding ring dates to an ancient belief that a vein from this finger ran straight to the heart; it was mentioned again in the 7th century in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. Interestingly, until the Council of Trent (concluded in 1563) the exchange of rings and the couple's consent was a civil ceremony. Afterwards, the council officially required that Catholic marriages be presided over by a priest.

### *The wedding party*

The third and final stage of the marriage takes place with the wedding party (*nozze*). The festivities lasted three days for Lorenzo the Magnificent's party held at the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi. There were five banquets with 150 calves and 4,000 capons brought in for the catering, along with local and international wine and 17 tonnes of sweetmeats and sugared almonds. The only document we have locating the bronze statue of David by Donatello in the centre of the courtyard of this *palazzo* is a letter from one of the guests describing the event. There was entertainment organised throughout the event, a battle staged and allegorical floats and plays performed in the garden.

After the ring ceremony, the bride would bring many new items to the new house. Often there was a parade from her house to the groom's displaying the expensive fabrics and items in the procession. However, sumptuary laws which limited certain ostentatious display rendered wooden chests more and more important, which in turn increased their importance of presence. These *cassoni* (often called *forzieri* in Florence) were often beautifully carved and painted with scenes relative to the festive event. These chests were then used as storage in the new home and seating. Later, the painted scenes were cut from their setting and placed elsewhere. Botticelli painted a wonderful reclining Venus and Mars, now in the National Gallery, London, which art historians have concluded was originally from a *cassone* or used as a *spalliera*. From the word for shoulders (*spalle*), a *spalliera* was a wall panel placed at shoulder height. This was the same presumed function of Botticelli's *Primavera*, pictured on the previous page.

Weddings have always been big business in Tuscany and celebrities and romantics of all nationalities, I have no doubt, will continue to plan their special day in this little piece of paradise. ■





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*Clockwise from top left: Bright platters of seafood at Il Riccio restaurant; Capri's stunning topography; a glamorous partygoer arrives in Capri harbour; faraglionni – rock stacks; Fleur rests her weary legs after a long climb; café life in Capri Town; a tree-lined path leads gently upwards; a rare sighting of some fellow walkers*





48 HOURS IN...

# Capri

**Fleur Kinson** discovers the island's best-kept secrets – its wonderful walking routes, far from the crowds, with stunning natural beauty in every direction...

**T**owering out of the Bay of Naples, Capri has long seemed a distinctly enchanted island. It was from here that the sirens of Greek myth reputedly called to Odysseus. And the seductive aura of the place hasn't abated since. The Emperor Tiberius famously built a pleasure palace on Capri, where he entertained lovers till he tired of them and threw them off the high cliffs. Various sensualists were later drawn ineluctably to the island, including the Marquis de Sade, and throughout the 20th century a long succession of artists, writers, actors and politicians all fell under Capri's spell.

And how could a place so beautiful incline the mind to anything but pleasure? Capri is a sensual delight. Gentle sea breezes and hot sunshine take turns to caress your limbs, flowers and pine trees sweeten each inhalation, and the eye is constantly assailed with high white rock and wide blue sea, with fruit-coloured villas and teeming greenery. It was this aspect of Capri that I wanted to explore – not the yachts and luxury boutiques, not the spa-pool idylls and exquisitely-dressed evening *passaggiata*. I just wanted to walk for hours across the island's exceptionally beautiful terrain. And so, armed with a map of Capri's various paths and trails, I set out for two days of blissful walking.

My boat sweeps into the harbour at sunset, and up in Capri Town's *piazzetta* I find the glamorous pre-prandial *passaggiata* in full swing. The honeyed light of a warm September evening gilds the locals in their effortlessly elegant clothes ➤



Photography © Fleur Kinson



## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

## THE BLUE GROTTO ❶

*Via Grotta Azzurra, Anacapri*

This brilliantly illuminated sea cave mustn't be missed. A trick of sunlight passing through rock apertures floods the water with a barely credible luminescence. Getting there is a mini-adventure, too, with exuberant boatmen playing up the drama as they man the oars to squeeze you in and out of the tiny entrance. If you're lucky they'll also sing opera. Open 9am to sunset; boat fare/entry €13.

## VILLA JOVIS ❷

*Via Tiberio*

It's worth coming here for the walk alone – a wonderful 45-minute stroll from Capri Town along attractive pedestrian lanes flanking villas and domestic gardens. The sea views grow steadily more panoramic before climaxing at the high cliff-top ruins of the villa itself – a huge, sprawling complex of ancient Roman brick. Open 9am-1pm; entry €2.

## VILLA SAN MICHELE ❸

*Viale Axel Munthe 34, Anacapri*

☎ +39 081 837 1401

[www.villasanmichele.eu](http://www.villasanmichele.eu)

This divine fin-de-siècle villa was built by the Swedish philanthropist, doctor and writer Axel Munthe and still serves as a Swedish cultural institution. The gardens are the very embodiment of serenity, with Classical and Egyptian statuary musing upon the breathtaking views out to sea. A sighingly beautiful place. Open 9am-3:30/6pm; entry €7.

## CASA ROSSA ❹

*Via Giuseppe Orlandi 78, Anacapri*

☎ +39 081 838 2193

This striking Moorish-cum-Venetian structure with its distinctive deep red walls was built by an American colonel in the late 19th century. It's a fascinating place to while away an hour admiring its fine collection of historical paintings of Capri and its various archaeological finds – the most unforgettable being the sea-eroded statues that once formed a Roman-era nymphaeum beneath the waters of the Blue Grotto. Open 10am-4/5/8pm; entry €7.

## CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE ❺

*Piazza San Nicola, Anacapri*

This outwardly unremarkable 18th-century church is famed for its mesmerising majolica floor depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden backed by a towering Tree of Knowledge and surrounded by birds and animals. You can view the whole from a small balcony above, then follow a surrounding boardwalk to view the tiles up close. Open in daylight hours; entry free.



*Glistening rain-coated pines*

## DON'T MISS

**TAKING A DIP** Capri's cute *bijou* beaches consist of tiny strips of pebbles or platforms between rocks rather than expanses of soft golden sand. They have an intimate, secluded charm, and a clubby atmosphere. Try the areas around Marina Piccola, i Faraglioni, Faro and the Blue Grotto.

and the tourists in their adequate-to-shabby travel-rags. Everyone is happily milling about, perusing shop windows, sipping aperitifs and plotting where to have dinner tonight. Vesuvius broods across the water, and a small volley of fireworks goes off from the roof of a large yacht in the port below – some private celebration made suddenly public.

Reluctantly tearing myself from the happy hubbub, I board a taxi and am whisked away to the island's other

When I awake and open the curtains, a monsoon is pounding onto my balcony. The nearest hillside has vanished beneath a shroud of vapour, and the sky is a ragged, low-hanging mass of hostility. I'm English and so I know every shade of rain, but I've never seen anything like this. It's violent, tropical rain. Exotic, alien rain. It pours like a waterfall and roars like a lion. It's thrilling, but it's no good for walking in. I close the curtains and go back to bed, expecting

*I bound through a wild pine forest with a layer of red-orange pine-needles underfoot*

main settlement – the quieter and possibly even prettier Anacapri, set at the towering highest point of the island. Here I'm enfolded into pure luxury at the Capri Palace Hotel, and after a magnificent meal followed by stupefied strolls round glowing turquoise pools, I fall asleep to dreams of tomorrow's long, sun-kissed walks, where I shall be surrounded by fragrant vegetation and enjoy spectacular views across a cobalt sea.

it to pass over in an hour or two. But it doesn't. It's a freak storm, and baffling to the locals. I hear that on the mainland, the road to Sorrento is impassable. How exciting. But what to do? Will I let a soaking scupper my day's walking plans? I will not. I gamely don my leather jacket, swathe my camera in plastic, and set out.

Clearly impressed by my fortitude, the rain pulls back a little, downgrading its mood from furious





The pretty streets of Anacapri



The Blue Grotto



La Casa Rossa, Anacapri

to sullen. I follow a series of charming pedestrian alleys out of Anacapri, admiring the fecund back gardens of passing homes – fig trees, vines, fat orange marrows lying on the soil, tomatoes and fruits heavily pendant from bushes. The views out across the sea to other islands and the mainland would be breath-taking in clear weather. But rain or no rain, the air is beguilingly soft and sweet, and my spirits are high. My shoes become squelching sponges, my soaked trouser-ends slap against my ankles and my hair hangs in wet rat-tails round my face, but truly, the walk just gets lovelier.

After admiring a dramatic clifftop vista of the distant Punta Carena lighthouse which marks the southwestern tip of the island and the intended end of my walk, I bound downhill through a fragrant wild pine forest with a springy layer of vivid red-orange pine-needles underfoot. The rain-shiny tree trunks twist at pretty angles, and there's a halo of radiant green needles overhead. It's an arresting, Arcadian landscape – in any weather. I navigate through a tiny village then down a whole hillside of

steps that leave my legs trembling by the time they spill me out onto a tiny road. I can *hear* the occupants of the few passing cars thinking "Who is that crazy, sodden blonde woman marching through this downpour, and why?" The rain finds renewed vigour as I make a final push to the lighthouse, where I whoop defiantly at the sky and then throw myself on the mercy of a passing bus to deliver me to a hot bath back at the hotel.

The next day, it's a tense moment when I roll up the electric shutters. Hot light sweeps across the room. Sun! Sun! I leap onto a bus to Capri Town, intending to walk the entire east of the island. The tall, narrow bus merrily rattles me down the hairpin bends of tight little roads evidently built with no expectation of two-way traffic. There's an audible gasp from my fellow passengers whenever we pass an oncoming vehicle – only inches away, with nothing but a solid rockface on one side and a death-plunge on the other.

I alight into the scrum of Capri Town and squeeze my way through once-lovely streets now flanked with the nauseating glitz of millionaire- ➤

## DON'T MISS

**MONTE SOLARO**  
At 600 metres above sea level, this is the very highest point on Capri. It enjoys all the gobsmacking views of the island and its surrounding landmasses that you might imagine. You can climb up here on foot, or take the scenic chairlift ride up from Anacapri.

## WHERE TO STAY

### GRAND HOTEL QUISISANA 6

Via Camerelle 2, Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0788

[www.quisi.com](http://www.quisi.com)

This elegant, historic landmark of a hotel has been accommodating celebrities and heads of state for more than 150 years (although they infamously turned away Oscar Wilde). The place is a delirium of bright luxury with all the lush gardens, arresting vistas, perfect pools and fine restaurants you might imagine. Bedrooms are white-tiled and dazzling.

Doubles from €300

### HOTEL STELLA MARIS 7

Via Roma 27, Capri

☎ +39 081 837724

[www.stellamariscapri.com](http://www.stellamariscapri.com)

A very rare example of a low-priced hotel on Capri, the Stella Maris is just 20 metres from the piazzetta and very friendly. Rooms are simple but clean and comfortable.

Doubles from €50

### CAPRI PALACE HOTEL 8

Via Capodimonte 14, Anacapri

☎ +39 081 978 0111

[www.capripalace.com](http://www.capripalace.com)

Poised at the top of the island, this large, sumptuous hotel is one of Capri's best.

The elegant arches, vaults and columns of the building are offset by luminous pools and striking works of contemporary art. Rooms are decorated in luxurious natural fabrics in serenely muted colours. There's a spa and designer boutique shops, plus three restaurants – two with Michelin stars.

Doubles from €350

### HOTEL VILLA BRUNELLA 9

Via Tragara 24, Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0122

[www.villabrunella.it](http://www.villabrunella.it)

Perched not far from the panoramic Punta Tragara, this very pretty and secluded-feeling hotel enjoys fabulous views.

Sea-facing rooms all have private terraces, while garden-facing rooms have private patios. The décor is bright yet homey, with floral colours vivid against white majolica. There's a spa, and a good restaurant.

Doubles from €230

### HOTEL VILLA KRUPP 10

Viale Matteotti 12, Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0362 / 7473

[www.villakrupp.com](http://www.villakrupp.com)

This lower-priced, family-run hotel enjoys a lovely location on a clifftop near the Gardens of Augustus. The white, airy rooms gaze out onto the sea, the gardens or Capri Town in the near-distance. There's a panoramic clifftop breakfast terrace and a belvedere where you can sit and dream.

Doubles from €150



## WHERE TO EAT

**RISTORANTE IL RICCIO 11**

Via Gradola 4/6, Località Grotta Azzurra, Anacapri

☎ +39 081 837 1380

[www.ristoranteilriccio.com](http://www.ristoranteilriccio.com)

Spectacularly set on sweeping terraces atop a sea-gazing cliffside, this stylish and friendly Michelin-starred eaterie enjoys spectacular views of the entire Bay of Naples. Glorious seafood is served in lavish abundance. Do *not* miss the chance to visit the majolica-tiled dessert kitchen.

€ € €

**VERGINIELLO 12**

Via Lo Palazzo 25/A, Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0944

[www.ristorantepizzeriaverginiellocapri.it](http://www.ristorantepizzeriaverginiellocapri.it)

It's not easy to eat well at modest cost on Capri, but here you can. Classic local dishes, seafood and pasta, plus great handmade pizzas. There are wonderful views of the Bay of Naples outside, and cheery-bright, homey décor within.

€ €

**IL GERANIO 13**

Via Matteotti, Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0616

[www.geraniocapri.com](http://www.geraniocapri.com)

Passing pretty shops then winding along a fragrant avenue of trees, you finally arrive at a deeply romantic spot – with fine views over the tall, sea-girt white rocks called *I Faraglioni*. The cuisine is high-quality Mediterranean and international fare, and the atmosphere is serenely celebratory.

€ € €

**L'OLIVO 14**

Capri Palace Hotel, Via Capodimonte 14, Anacapri

☎ +39 081 978 0111

[www.capripalace.com](http://www.capripalace.com)

Boasting two Michelin stars, this sumptuous restaurant immerses you in luxury. Warmly lit and as comfortable as a living room, you experience sensual delight long before the food arrives. And then, oh wow! Wait until you taste the desserts, though – these are better than anything. Outdoor diners can enjoy the terrace beside the illuminated pool.

€ € €

**EL MERENDERO 15**

Via Marina Piccola 74

☎ +39 334 933 6058 / 108 5577

[www.merendero2004.altervista.org](http://www.merendero2004.altervista.org)

Set beside the public beach of Marina Piccola, there's a distinctly tropical vibe, underscored with upbeat Latin music. Piles of fresh fruit lie about, waiting to be pulped into juices, piled onto yoghurt or mashed into ice-cold granitas.

€

## DON'T MISS

**INSALATA  
CAPRESE**

Named after the island but popular throughout the wider region, this simple salad is rendered sublime by the sheer quality of its locally-grown/made ingredients: velvety, moist buffalo-milk mozzarella, intensely flavoursome tomatoes, torn leaves of fragrant basil, and good olive oil.



boutiques and awash with slow-moving backpacks and baseball caps. Things improve considerably as I leave the town and join the network of quiet pedestrian paths that weave all over the island. Relishing the warm sunshine on my legs and arms, I stride past teeming gardens and pretty villas, deeply breathing in the sweet, delicate smell of the pine trees. I stop only to admire a clifftop panorama of offshore rock stacks and a yacht-dotted marina – its inky blue depths ceding to turquoise shallows, all streaked with the white trails of travelling boats.

From this blessed vantage point, I head down and along a paved hiking trail that sinuously curls around the southeastern edge of the island – sloping up and down, and periodically breaking into steep steps. I pass very few other walkers. It's all shrieking cicadas and bushy trees, the sudden flash of coppery lizards across white rock or grey stone. It's all solitude and space, an exhilarated immersion in a perfect natural world. Capri Town is less than a mile away, but it's a million miles away. The magnificent haughty lump of the Sorrento Peninsula looks approvingly at me from across the water ahead.

I want to see how much ground I can cover in four hours, so I power onward. Rest-stops are for weaklings. I round the island's southeast corner in a blur of a billion steps and carry on higgledy-piggledy northward, passing an ancient grotto-temple and climbing up, up, up to the arresting *Arco Naturale* – a high natural arch of white stone with the sea at its feet and endless tumbles of leaf all around. The sole viewing point for the arch is a tiny terrace in the sky, almost abutting the rock of the arch itself – making it a spot both vertiginous and claustrophobic. Here I allow myself a

five-minute break to stand agog, catch my breath and ward off a feared heart attack after all the climbing.

The plan now is to go all the way up to the ruins of Tiberius's Villa Jovis, at the northeastern tip of the island. I plough heroically on, joining new pedestrian alleys that carry me past curlicued gates guarding the jungly front gardens of heart-meltingly lovely villas. Rampant bougainvillea spill fluorescent pink and purple across white stone walls backlit by vivid blue sky. Out across the bay I can see the hazy tump of Ischia and the distant blur of Naples. The path climbs steadily all the way to Villa Jovis, adding to the sense of rising towards some wonderful final goal. Which of course it is – a sprawling mass of Roman bricks worn smooth by sea wind and millennia, set on cliffs halfway to the sky.

Full of endorphins, glowing with exercise and sun, I crunch back through a sloping hillside wood. The branches suddenly open out to reveal a huge view across the entire length of the island – down to Capri Town and up the high hulk of rock beyond it with Anacapri perched on top. I'm seized by a delicious roller-coaster feeling of having crested one high point and rolling giddily down before escalating towards another. The island feels like a great tilting entity – undulating, full of high climbs and fun plunges. It's a playground you can ride around on foot. You could do a different long walk here every day, until you knew the place intimately. The island is small enough to be knowable in its entirety, but topographically exciting enough to keep you always enchanted. Capri, you great beguiler, you siren of the bay. Among everything else you are, you're a walker's paradise. ■





View of the sea through a natural arch



Souvenir liqueur bottles



The ruins of Tiberius's Villa Jovis

## GETTING THERE

### ► BY PLANE

You can fly to Naples from all over the UK with BA, easyJet, Thomson, Meridiana and Monarch.

### ► BY BOAT

There are regular hydrofoil and ferry services to the island from Naples and Sorrento, and further summer services from Positano, Salerno and Ischia.

### ► BY CAR

Driving is greatly restricted on the island – and you don't need a car anyway.

The floor of San Michele Church



## ► KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES (full meal per person, not including wine)

€ Up to €25

€ € €26-€50

€ € € More than €50



# Christian Mosaics

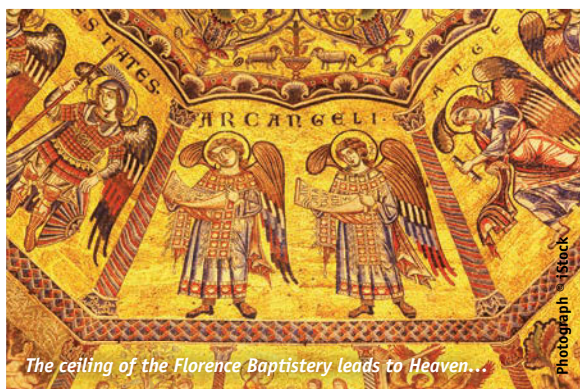
*The use of gold in mosaic art was introduced in a big way during the early Christian period of the late Roman Empire*

MOSAICS DAZZLE IN CHRISTIAN BUILDINGS due to the luxurious splendour created by the gold tiles and the brilliance from the rich colour glass. The individual square shaped tiles are called *tesserae* (pl.) from the Greek meaning four-sided. The gold tesserae were made by sandwiching 24 carat gold leaf between two slabs of glass which were then melded together in the kiln. Often the mosaics on the walls and ceiling were ungrouted, unlike those on the ground, so as to maximise the penetration and reflection of light generated from the surface. Moreover, the dazzle factor was, and still is today, often compounded by laying the tesserae at slightly different angles to the surface so as to really catch light from all angles.

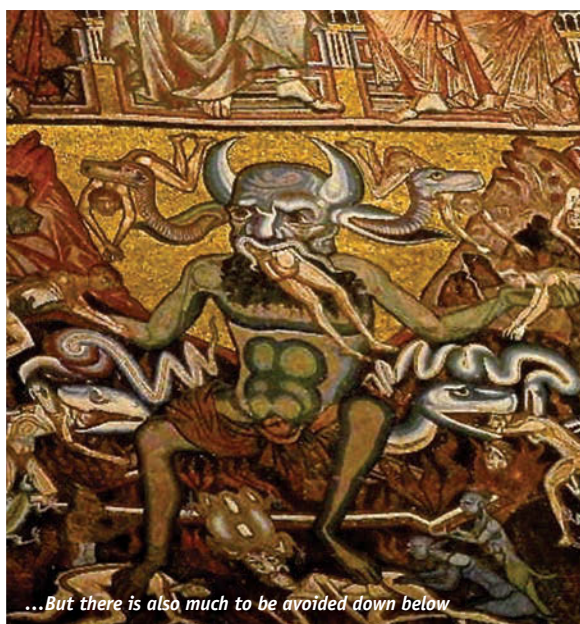
Christian mosaic decorative cycles were often in highly closed spaces and so the flickering candle light used to light the area would have been an important aid in creating an all encompassing mystical atmosphere. When considered in architectural context, along with the chanting, incense and hypnotic ritual, or Mass, it is no surprise that the interiors of these churches were considered almost midway between Heaven and Earth.

Mosaics were very popular in the Romanesque period (1000-1200s). Vast expanse of wall with small windows are characteristic of this period's architecture, which lends itself to the mosaic medium. However, it was costly and so reserved typically for the most revered areas of monumental buildings. Gold in decorative art was symbolic of Heaven, the gold mosaic was often in the apse area and areas where the Eucharistic rites were performed. Breathtaking Romanesque religious buildings with jaw dropping mosaic work can be found in Venice (St Mark's Basilica), Florence (the Baptistry) and Palermo (Monreale Cathedral).

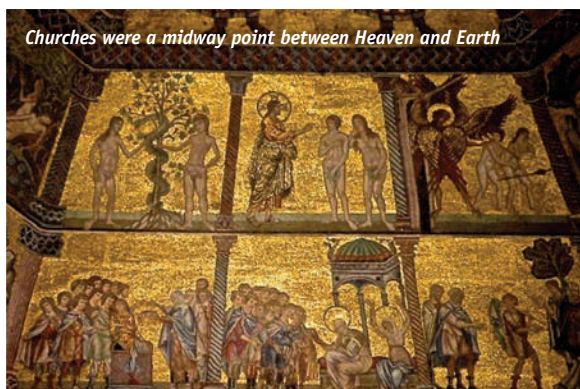
The use of gold in mosaic art was introduced in a big way during



*The ceiling of the Florence Baptistery leads to Heaven...*



*...But there is also much to be avoided down below*



*Churches were a midway point between Heaven and Earth*



*The Florence Baptistery in full view*





the early Christian period of the late Roman Empire, the 4th century AD. Before this, however, mosaic had always been a very common part of the decorative fabric from the Ancient Greek period. The Ancient Greeks, followed by the Romans, used mosaic mostly as floor decoration, using durable materials such as marble, stone, shells. They too decorated some mosaic walls and ceilings and here they did introduce more delicate fragile materials such as glass, for greater effect, but this was not as common.

With the end of Christian persecution in the early 4th century AD and the subsequent elevation of Christianity to one of the official religions of the Empire, the construction era of the great Christian basilicas began, and luxurious gold and brilliant glass colour mosaics were all the rage. St Mary Major, St John in Lateran, St Paul outside the walls and St Peter's (the four major basilicas in Rome) glowed and shone like Heaven on Earth.

Ravenna was the capital of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century AD and after its fall it was the capital of the Byzantine possessions in Italy. Without a doubt the mosaic decorations in the religious structures here are some of the most beautiful monuments in the country.

In 1506 Pope Julius II ordered the complete destruction of St Peter's and the construction for the new and improved basilica began, finished more than one and a half centuries later. It was to be the symbol of the new Rome, after centuries of unrest. Mosaics were to be an important feature in the new decoration. The costly medium reminded all of the great early Christian basilicas and the strength of Christianity. There is only one painting inside St Peter's basilica, everything else is a mosaic. An official Vatican mosaic workshop was created in the late 16th century and still exists within Vatican city today. ■



#### ABOUT THE WRITER

**FREYA MIDDLETON** is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at [www.freyasflorence.com](http://www.freyasflorence.com)

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# Weddings

Elsewhere in the issue, Freya Middleton tells us of the joys of an Italian wedding. Here are four companies who can **make the dream come true** for you too...

## CHARISMA ITALY

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*With over 20 years in tourism, our strength lies in our wealth of local knowledge*

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Britta Hartmann-De Marchi of Creative Wedding explains what a wedding planner needs to know to give good advice and a first cost overview.

**Budget:** a budget is helpful to understand which region of Italy may be right and what type of location is affordable.

**Style/ambience:** Tell me about your ideas and dreams, about colours, ambience, friends. This helps me to understand if your budget can match this or what alternatives you may have.

**Region of Italy:** Let me know if you have memories of a region.



**Date:** Not only summertime is enjoyable in Italy; winter weddings can be big fun, in April and May the sun is already out, and autumn can be still warm and less touristy.

**Guests:** Help me work out suitable locations/hotels. Who

*Tell me about your ideas and dreams, about colours, ambience and friends*

These landscapes, cities, cultures can develop into proposals.

**Civil or church wedding:** Different nationalities have different ways of preparation for a civil wedding, and for Catholic Church weddings in Italy, it is important to know your religion.



is coming? Is it more a formal group of family and business partners, in this case you surely want to make a good impression. Is it a more friend-orientated party, where we focus on fun?

The better you describe your expectations, the more precise and correct the information I may put together for you.

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Ionian Weddings' Director and co-founder, Jane Stuart-Palikira, says: "We are seeing increased demand for Italian weddings from couples of all ages who are looking for something different for their special day and are attracted by the favourable climate. Cost is, understandably,



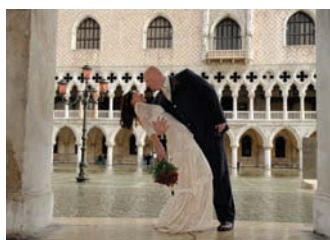
local paperwork, flowers, bridal hair, reception for 20, wedding cake and photography.

Venues include villas on the Amalfi Coast, a castle on Lake Garda, a palazzo by the Rialto Bridge, Tuscan wine estates and a luxury Sardinian hotel.

*We're seeing increased demand for Italian weddings from couples of all ages*

a huge factor – potentially up to 75 per cent of the cost of a UK wedding can be saved by tying the knot in the Mediterranean."

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*We make sure your wedding will perfectly meet all of your wishes*

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A civil ceremony is a simple exchange of rings in the presence of two witnesses and an interpreter. They are usually conducted in Campidoglio, Complesso Vignola Mattei or Villa Lais.



### SYMBOLIC CEREMONY

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So whoever desires to get married in Italy, north or south, with 2 people or bringing 100 guests, just get in contact with me.

*See you soon, Britta*



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St Francis  
at the Convento  
dei Francescani  
Cappuccini



Sunset in Gubbio



Lysa preparing to  
fly to Florence

Photography © Lysa Walder

# ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

The Path of St Francis is a walking trail inspired by the life of St Francis of Assisi that takes you from the north of Tuscany, down through Umbria and into Lazio.

**Lysa Walder** starts at the top, then continues all the way on to Rome...

*The relative simplicity of carrying your world on your back and stepping out each morning in to the great unknown, losing and finding your way again, is fabulously enlightening*





**W**alking along the Via Francigena from Valle d'Aosta to Rome in 2013 whetted my appetite for ultra walking. No sooner had my first adventure finished than I was longing to begin the next and in October last year I took the leap again.

I found another pilgrims' trail, the Way of San Francis, which meanders from the Sanctuary of La Verna in northeastern Tuscany, down through Umbria and finishing in the Lazio region. I decided to extend the final stretch to suit my purposes and finish in Rome. The route would cover about 500km in 18 days, just a hop and a skip really when compared to the 999km in the 32 days of my first pilgrimage.

I flew to Florence and took the train from there to Arezzo; it was uncharacteristically warm and humid for October. First priority, I needed to find a place to sleep near the train station in Arezzo as I had an early start the next day. The next morning I was up with the larks and took the regional train to Bibbiena, from where I hopped on a bus along with dozens of school kids to the sanctuary.

#### THE FIRST OF MANY STEPS

From the sanctuary I took the first of many steps on the long journey and was swiftly immersed in dappled

sunlight and silence of the cool, damp, leafy woods of Mount Penna, populated with majestic ash, maple, beech and fir trees.

To walk along an ancient route for religious, spiritual, or any reasons actually, is a fantastic way to live in the moment. It was as if in some way I'd been returned to my factory settings. The relative simplicity of carrying your world on your back and stepping out each morning in to the great unknown, losing and finding your way again, is fabulously enlightening.

Hiking in solitude in the midst of the Italian countryside offered the opportunity to discover the less well known attractions of the regions, and in the process I discovered something of myself that had become lost amidst the noise and chaos of my ordinary city life. Out of necessity my inner strengths and resourcefulness kicked in, particularly when I was in pain, hungry, lost the path or struggled to find a bed for the night.

Encountering ordinary folk going about their day is a privilege that is rarely bestowed on a package tourist. A traveller on foot, however, will frequently pass the local characters chattering away on a bench in a tiny hamlet, playing cards in the only bar in the village or shouting out to each other from atop a ladder as they prepare nets to catch ripe olives in grooves scored out of the earth with mathematical precision.

I was blessed with mostly warm and sunny days and never became immune to the staggeringly



*Sunrise in Spello  
casting her spell*



Tilled fields by the road  
leaving Spoleto

beautiful vistas; I did however run out of suitable ways to adequately describe them. Even harder to convey is the incredible stillness and silence to be found while deep in the light of dappled woods or on the breezy ridge of a mountain. The familiar rhythm of one's own breath and boots on the rubble track is interrupted only by birdsong, the scuttling of lizards, or a dog barking in the distance.

Hilltop towns appear like crumbling praline wedding cakes erupting from the earth on the horizon. Once inside their ancient walls the pretty cobbled streets beg to be explored. Each a new place to meet people, hear the language and gorge on regional culinary delights. The smell of coffee issuing from tiny hole-in-the-wall bars and of stoves burning chestnut wood coupled with the feel of cobbles underfoot reminding me constantly of exactly where in the world I am privileged to be.

The Way of St Francis is, in every sense, as developed as it is today because of the efforts of one intrepid woman, Angela Seracchioli, who has over recent years painstakingly developed the signage, the distinctive yellow Tau crosses, that keep walkers on the right path. She has also enabled thousands of pilgrims, including myself, to more easily navigate the route through her guidebook *On the Road with Saint Francis*.

I should tell you about the highlights of my adventure, but how can I do that when every day was packed to the hilt with spellbinding scenery, stories of kindness and compassion and moments of unadulterated *gioia di vivere*? Don't for one minute get me wrong here because that doesn't mean that it was all a piece of pizza for me. At times it was hard, damn hard, especially in

the beginning before I really got used to the effort that walking up mountain and down valley required of my body. For example, I arrived exhausted and in great need of a long, cold glass of Moretti in Passo di Viamaggio after covering a hot and hilly 30km on day one of my journey, followed by an even more vertically challenging and sweaty 32km on day two. The physical effort this entailed meant that not only had I lost my body weight in perspiration but I practically climbed the stairs to my room in tears (after waiting until I was certain there was no one around to witness my plight) alternating between clambering on all fours and bottom shuffling because my hips had all but seized up and I couldn't lift my feet.

## HAIR-RAISING MOMENTS

There was the occasional hair-raising moment, too. For example, when I rounded a bend on a deserted and densely wooded path I came face to face with a herd of enormous white cattle, each one armed with a set of lethal looking horns. Terrified, I couldn't remember if I should run, stare, avoid eye contact or roll into a ball. Instead I charmed them with a little cow whispering as I walked through the middle of them with feigned nonchalance, my heart banging like a drum in my chest, hoping they wouldn't gore me to death before using me as their sweaty human salt lick.

I was somewhat ill-advisedly walking during the hunting season, which caused another very scary moment because I came within a hair's breadth of being shot. Up until this point the sounds of the shotguns had generally been far enough in the distance not to worry me but ➤

## INFORMATION

➤ Lysa kept to the pilgrims' path with the aid of *On the Road With Saint Francis* by Angela M Seracchioli. ISBN 978-88-6189-247-7. See also Angela's website at [www.diquipassofrancesco.it](http://www.diquipassofrancesco.it), which translates as 'Here walked Francis' and is the original Italian title of the book.







*The familiar rhythm of one's own breath and boots on the rubble track is interrupted only by birdsong, the scuttling of lizards, or a dog barking in the distance*



A mural depicting Saint Francis



Rome's Via della Conciliazione



St Francis in Rome







The nice people of Spoleto Croce Rosa



Nicoletta and her lovely family



Feeding the chickens in Rosanna's orto



Sister Carmella

Tuscany beauty, at the top of the trail

*There were the random acts of kindness... The Croce Bianca staff in who walked me to a hotel and introduced me to the owner because they didn't want me walking about on my own at night*





Lysa with Anna  
in Stroncone

one day I was marching through woodland when I heard the crack of shot and a bullet seemed to whistle past my head. I almost dropped to the ground in shock. Three hunters came into view. I said 'Ciao' but they obviously weren't the types for small talk so I quickly moved on; my path took me around a clearing and they continued to fire in my general direction while I prayed under my breath to all the gods that I may granted another day of life. All my days on the front line working for the ambulance service in London had prepared me well; I just wish I'd thought to wear my bullet proof vest!

Then there were the random acts of kindness. The Croce Bianca ambulance staff in Arezzo, who very kindly left their post and walked with me to a little, reasonably priced hotel where they introduced me to the owner because they didn't want me walking about town on my own at night. Ivana and Maria, who baked me a whole apple and nut cake to take with me after I'd stayed in their B&B. Rosa and Linda, who hosted me in Spoleto and gave a fabulous guided tour of the city by night after a pizza supper. My friend Silvia's friend's parents, Iginio and Anna in Stroncone – wonderful hosts who sent me on my way with homemade wine and a packed lunch to feed the 5,000. Rosanna, who kindly took me home with her when I could find no B&B to sleep in. She asked me if I'd like to join her feeding her menagerie of farm animals on her *orta* before returning to eat supper which consisted of freshly laid eggs and more homemade wine. Marco

of Croce Rosa Italiana and Anna Rita with her homely Ostello Franciscano in Valfabbrica, for a wonderful stay, and for taking me for breakfast and to the top of the tower of the church. Nicoletta, who spontaneously invited me to lunch with her family after I asked directions in the street. I'll never forget her kindness and generous spirit. Sister Carmella in the convent in Rome. Carla and Massimo in Rome. American couple Bill and Bonita, who paid for my night in Agriturismo Santa Giusta just because I gave her a check-up following a nasty fall and divvied up my painkillers with her.

#### THE BEATIFICATION OF PAUL VI

My last day, on the 18th October, arriving in Via Consiliazione it was a unexpected, humid 32 degrees. The roads were closed, police and TV crew were everywhere. All of this was due to the double celebration of the conclusion of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and the Beatification of the Servant of God Paul VI. (And there was me thinking it was all for me!)

The crowd dispersed at 13.00hrs, leaving me easily able to meet Silvia and one of my oldest friends, Jaine, and her family under the obelisk in Piazza San Pietro. We sweltered as we spent a couple of hours sight-seeing together before enjoying supper, now as a tourist and no longer a traveller – until the next time. (Which will be Via San Benedetto.) ■

*Lysa Walder is fundraising on JustGiving for Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust*  
[www.justgiving.com/lysa-walder2](http://www.justgiving.com/lysa-walder2)





graphic: ilarimarc@gmail.com



# CINGOLI

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annual international mountain bike challenge on 25/26th April. [www.avisbikecingoli.it/9fossi](http://www.avisbikecingoli.it/9fossi)). Alternatively enjoy the excellent food and wine from our region or just sit and relax in one of our many bars and restaurants and watch the world go by at a leisurely pace.

Unsurprisingly given all the above attractions and the natural beauty of the area, Cingoli has become a 'go to' location for weddings and honeymoons. Why not have your special day in this very special location?



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LE RONCOLE AND BUSSETO – mention these names and Giuseppe Verdi immediately comes to mind. He was born in the village of Le Roncole but grew up in the nearby town of Busseto, and thousands of opera-loving pilgrims visit these places in Emilia-Romagna every year, probably humming snatches of the *Anvil Chorus* or *Va Pensiero* all the while. Or Lucca... Who can think of that picturesque Tuscan city without seeming to hear Pavarotti nailing that last 'Vincerò' in *Nessun Dorma*? For Lucca is the birthplace of Puccini, and in the piazza named for him there is a bronze statue of the Maestro himself, debonair and handsome as ever.

And then there is Pesaro. It's on the Adriatic, just where the ancient Via Flaminia turned up the coast toward Rimini. For some, the name will evoke memories of the Malatesta and Sforza families, who ruled the town in turn during the 15th century. Art lovers will recall the famous *Madonna of Pesaro* by Titian, from the Church of the Frari in Venice.

Many of us, though, will hear music. Perhaps the overture to *Guillaume Tell* will gallop across our minds – possibly accompanied by the Lone Ranger and Tonto. Or Figaro may be

# The food of love, in Pesaro

*Pesaro is the birthplace of Gioachino Rossini, the most popular opera composer of his time*

boasting of his tonsorial talents to the admiring citizens of Seville. For Pesaro is the birthplace of Gioachino Rossini, the most popular opera composer of his time. Besides *Guillaume Tell* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, works like *La Cenerentola*, *La Donna del Lago*, and *L'italiana in Algeri* were wildly popular during his lifetime, and are still performed regularly today.

Rossini had many facets to his personality. Besides being a musical genius, he was a well-known and enthusiastic gourmand, as his figure later in life amply attests. Many famous chefs created dishes that they named in his honour, including *Tournedos Rossini*, a classic filet mignon with foie gras, truffles, and Madeira sauce. According to tradition, he personally invented the recipes for Cannelloni Rossini (filled with foie gras and truffles) and a risotto flavoured with beef marrow. He had a good deal of time to devote to his culinary hobby after he stopped composing operas, for at the age of 38, with an equal number of operas to his credit, he retired.

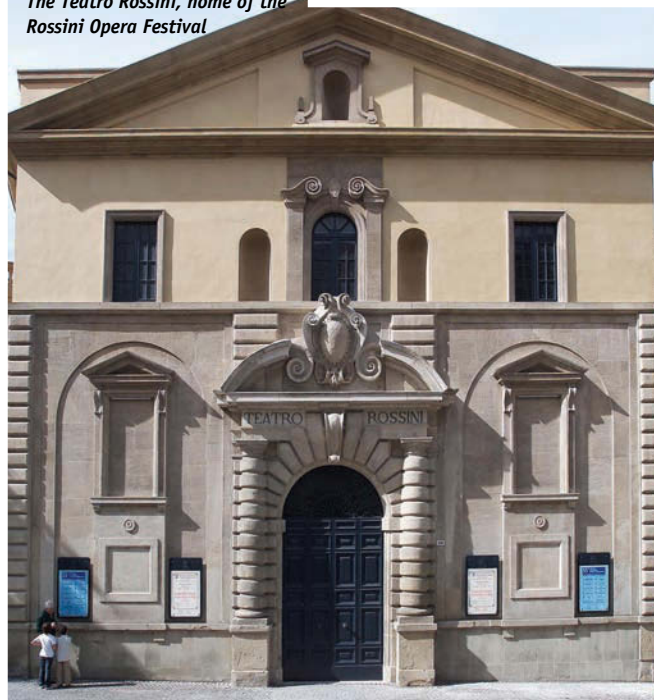
His operas remained popular despite his retirement, and though he lived to be 76 years old, he died a wealthy man. After bequests to his surviving relatives, he left the rest of his estate to the Comune of Pesaro. The legacy was used to establish a musical conservatory in the town, now known as the Conservatorio Statale di Musica 'Gioachino Rossini'. Here, hundreds of young musical hopefuls study composition, music theory, and performance.

The Fondazione G. Rossini, also created by his bequest, helps to sponsor the annual Rossini Opera Festival; and each August several of the master's works live again at the Teatro Rossini. In the town's restaurants, classic dishes are revived too – with lots of goose liver and truffles, no doubt. That's the way Rossini liked them. ■



Gioachino Rossini: genius and gourmand

The Teatro Rossini, home of the Rossini Opera Festival

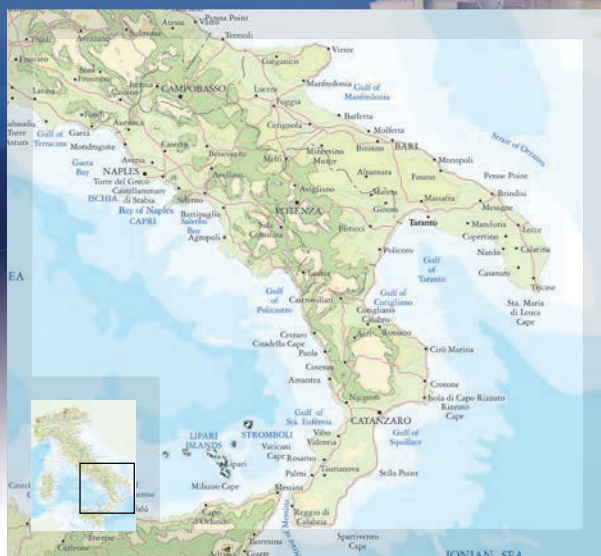


## ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN is a freelance writer based in Utah. A passionate amateur of art and history, and an avid traveller, he spends much time in Italy.



Photograph © iStock



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€100,000-€250,000

### APARTMENT WITH TERRACE, PIZZO

2-bedroom apartment in small new development with swimming pool and sea view. The property is set on the second floor and composed of sitting room with kitchen corner, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a large terrace with sea view. The apartment is sold totally furnished. Air conditioned. The property enjoys the use of a stunning condominium swimming pool with sea view. Pizzo is a charming ancient town set on the western coast of Calabria, on the Tyrrhenian sea, only 20 km from the international airport of Lamezia Terme. The coast is full of coves and beaches with an amazingly blue, crystal clear water.

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### STUDIO APARTMENT, ZAMBRONE

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Beautiful townhouse set right in the historical centre of Pizzo, a charming ancient town set on the western coast of Calabria, 20 km far from the towns of Tropea and Capo Vaticano, the so called 'Costa degli Dei'. The town of Pizzo preserves all the character of the ancient towns of the Calabrian coast, built over rocks overlooking the sea. The house has its independent entrance from the street and is set on 2 floors. First floor: Entrance into the sitting room with kitchen corner, main bathroom; Second floor: sitting room (2 sofas), bathroom and balcony with sea view, mezzanine (master bedroom). The property has been completely restored and is sold furnished.

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– Frank Lloyd Wright –



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# ITALY'S RICE ROAD

It is, sadly, a dying industry, with cheap imports threatening to change this landscape forever. But **Kevin Pilley** finds that in Italy there is still devotion to the humble grain of rice, and, of course, to the risotto it makes...





*Clockwise from top left: Ears of rice enjoy the Italian sunshine; storage at the Pila Vecchia Antica Riseria; and at Signor Melotti's farm; outside view of the Ferron farmstead*

Italy's first, and so far only, official rice ambassador looked solemnly down at my plate, shook his head mournfully and delivered his judgment: "This is not risotto. It is sludge. Mush."

"Glop," I admitted.

"Value her. She is like a precious pearl," said the *Maestro di Cucina*, holding up a tiny grain to the sunlight. "She is in the heart of every Italian."

Rice is in Gabriele Ferron's every thinking moment. He grows and mills his own rice on his Pila Vecchia Antica Riseria family farm in the paddy fields of the Padana Valley, 20 miles south of Verona and an hour and a half west of Venice. The family farm goes back to 1650. Ferron owns a collection of ancient rice-harvesting equipment. The farm is a living museum to a rural way of life that is now under threat.

"It's still great to prepare and eat risotto rice."

His smiled turned into a fatalistic shrug. "But no longer to grow it."

#### BIG BUSINESS

After the Far East and the Indian subcontinent, the United States and Brazil, Italy remains one of the

world's largest rice producers, and certainly the largest in Europe. The Italian rice industry seasonally employs some 6,000 farmers and 60 rice millers. The industry produces 1.4 million tonnes of rice every year and has an annual turnover of over €1 billion. The country's ancient rice fields cover approximately 240,000 hectares and stretch over the provinces of Vercelli, Pavia, Novara, Milano, Ferrara, Oristano, Mantova and Verona. Of all the rice eaten in Europe, more than 60 per cent has been produced in Italy.

But the profession is suffering as farmers turn to more commercial alternatives. Or give up entirely in the face of free trade. Due to imported rice from the United States and Thailand, the Haitian and Honduran rice industries have already virtually collapsed. The Po Valley and plains of Verona may follow. Along with the Ferrons, only five other families now work the ancient paddy fields around the Isola della Scala – *La Città del Riso* – the self-proclaimed rice capital of Italy... And of Europe. Domestic consumption is in danger of being swamped by cheaper imports. Quality cannot compete with quantity. Global warming is not helping either: The Bassa Veronese wetlands are slowly drying up.





## GETTING THERE

► The Isola della Scala is a rural *comune* to the south of Verona. You can get to Verona by aeroplane, but then you will need alternative transport to take you down the SS12. A car would do the job perfectly adequately, but you could also go by bicycle. The rice will thank you for it too. [www.veronagardabike.com](http://www.veronagardabike.com)

In Ferron's Restaurant Torre (he is an acclaimed chef as well as an official rice ambassador) the *grissini* are made from rice flour, as is all the pasta. Ferron makes rice *tiramisù* as well as rice ice cream. Cheese is served with rice jam.

And he is not alone. Virtually every restaurant in town is a *rissoteria* offering rice *degustazioni*. Restaurants serve special set menus offering courgette flower risotto and risottos with oranges, red chicory and Gorgonzola and spinach. And Ferron gives risotto masterclasses in typical Italian manner.

"There are different types of rice, like there are different types of women. Blonde and brunette. Plump like Arborio or short like Nano. Some with perfect bodies. Some with real souls! You must treat a risotto like a woman. Woo her. Spoil her. Lavish time on her. And she will repay you!"

## THE FESTIVAL OF RISOTTO

At the region's annual month-long autumn Risotto Festival, *La Festa del Risotto*, more than 300,000 plates of risotto are consumed. At its fair, *La Fiera del Riso*, you will find on sale everything you can imagine that can be

made from rice, from rice biscuits and wafers (*gallette*) to rice espresso, rice grappa, rice beer and even rice facial cream and shampoo.

The festival in Isola della Scala (formerly Isola Cenense – "the muddy land") began in 1967 restoring the tradition of working feasts at the end of the summer harvest. Local chefs and farmers meet to discuss and judge their produce and compete for prestigious prizes like *Il Chicco d'Oro* – the Golden Grain – and *La Spiga d'Oro* – *The Golden Ear*.

"They are the Oscars of the Italian rice world!" says Isola commune spokesperson Alberto Cogo. "Isola is the Hollywood of the rice growing world!"

Isola is the beginning and end of the *La Strada del Riso Vialone Nano Veronese*, or "Rice Road", which takes in 22 villages like Buttapietra, Palu and Nogara.

## THE MELOTTI FAMILY

The Melotti family is another local rice dynasty. Says Giuseppe Melotti, "Recipes have been handed down through generations. The traditional local one uses sirloin, veal, rosemary and cinnamon. This land was reclaimed by the Etruscans and cultivated by the





Clockwise from top left: Harvest time; inspecting the risotto; more than 300,000 plates of risotto will be consumed

Romans. Rice is part of our history. Rossini's opera *Tancredi* has a 'rice aria'! But the landscape is changing, physically and economically. Until the 1960s, 200,000 female *mondine* worked the rice fields around Verona. The children of rice workers had their own school. Rice field workers invented their own folk music."

Travelling the Rice Road is a history lesson. While the Romans used rice seeds as medicine, rice was probably properly introduced into mainland Italy during the late Middle Ages by Venetian or Genoese merchants. The Arabs brought seeds into Sicily, but northern Italy – despite the risk of malaria – was perfect for its cultivation, with its high temperatures and large quantities of water. Irrigation and water distribution systems were developed. The flooding of the rice fields is a centuries-old ritual, though scientists have found that the water contains high levels of toxic herbicide. In 1839 a Dominican friar brought disease-resistant seeds from the Philippines...

Italy's rice farmers grow short, barrel-shaped rice rather than long grain. There are four categories based on grain size: *comune*, *semifino*, *fino*, and *superfino*, the type most used for risotto.

Risotto alla Milanese is arguably the most famous Italian rice dish, flavoured with saffron and resembling Spanish *paella*. (Milan was under Spanish rule for nearly two centuries.) In Piedmont it is not unusual to find risotto with truffles. In the city of Venice, sautéed eel risotto is a Christmas tradition.

The risotto dish, being similar to *pilaf*, may have been a Venetian invention, or it may have come via southern Italy from the Saracens. In 1574, while working on Verona's cathedral, the master glassworker, who used saffron to colour his paints, is said to have added saffron to a rice dish served at a wedding. The guest pronounced it *risus optimus* (excellent rice) later possibly shortened to risotto.

My private lesson came to an end. The master demonstrated. And became chauvinistic. The rice undulated under his gyrating spatula. "She must be brought to the boil *allegro*. Cared for and looked after at all times. Repeatedly toasted with fine wine."

He adopted a learned, scholarly expression, and winked. "She must be constantly tasted. Her flesh must be firm and succulent and never lumpy."

It was clearly his stock line. ■



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# PUGLIAN POTTERY

Some ceramic pots await the kiln outside an artisan pottery in Puglia... This is a scene that an inhabitant from 2,000 years ago would readily recognise as a symbol of her homeland...

**T**he region of Puglia has been famed for its ceramics since the days of the Ancient Greeks – ie, some time before the Ancient Romans! The Greeks prized the clay of the region and knew that its pottery, well-made, often by skilled Greek immigrants, would command good prices throughout the Mediterranean – and indeed beyond (pieces have appeared in Cornwall, for example, where they would have been traded for tin). The pottery of Taras (now known as Taranto) was the best-known, but perhaps mainly because this was the chief port; the industry spread well into the hinterland as the reputation of Puglian pottery spread. Today, tourists buy ceramics in Grottaglie, though most of the purchases nowadays are of ornamental ceramics rather than practical homeware. Pottery as a major industry is no more. Not in Puglia. Not anywhere. We've got plastic for that now. Yet one can't help wondering if our Puglian inhabitant from 2,000 years ago, were she invited to a tupperware party today, would ask herself whether, aesthetically at least, we had really advanced in any meaningful way. ■



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# 4 takes on PIZZA

Authentic, properly made, pizza is capable of sitting right up there with any gourmet treat. **Ursula Ferrigno** is pressed to pick just four of her favourite recipes for the fast food that has universal appeal...







## Mint pesto and aubergine pizza

*Pizza con pesto di mentha fresca e melanzane*

In Sicily, the cooking is different in style to the rest of Italy, with Greek and African influences.

**SERVES 4**

► **Making pizza dough**  
1 hour 45 minutes

► **Preparation**  
40 minutes

► **Cooking**  
30 minutes

**1 quantity of pizza dough** (see following page)  
**a handful of chopped fresh mint, plus sprigs to garnish**  
**50g pine nuts**  
**50g freshly grated Parmesan cheese**  
**1 small garlic clove, peeled**  
**3 tbsp olive oil**  
**½ a small aubergine**  
**sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**250g mozzarella cheese, sliced**

To make the mint pesto, put the mint, pine nuts, Parmesan cheese, garlic and 2 tbsp of oil in a mortar and using the pestle, grind to a paste. If you do not have a pestle and mortar you can prepare the pesto in a food processor or blender. Simply blend until very creamy.

Slice the aubergine into thin rings. Put the slices in a colander, sprinkle with salt, cover and weigh down. Leave for about 30 minutes. Rinse and pat dry with kitchen paper. Heat the remaining 1 tbsp oil in a frying pan and fry the aubergine slices until lightly golden on both sides.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. On a very lightly floured surface, roll out the dough very thinly into a round. Place on an oiled baking sheet. Spread a generous layer of pesto onto the pizza base, then arrange the mozzarella and aubergine slices on top. Season with salt and pepper and add the remaining pesto.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes until golden and bubbling.



## Gorgonzola and artichoke mini pizza

*Pizzetta di gorgonzola e carciofi*

This pizza is very versatile as it can be served hot straight from the oven or cold for a picnic. Canned artichokes are a great store cupboard stand-by and a lot more convenient than cooking them from fresh. In this recipe I roast them before arranging them over mozzarella and Gorgonzola cheeses.

**SERVES 4**

► **Making pizza dough**  
1 hour 45 minutes

► **Preparation**  
10 minutes

► **Cooking**  
35 minutes

**1 quantity of pizza dough** (see following page)  
**6 canned artichoke hearts**  
**3 tbsp olive oil**  
**150g mozzarella cheese**  
**150g Gorgonzola cheese**  
**3 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan cheese**  
**1 tbsp toasted pine nuts**  
**1 tsp finely chopped fresh sage**  
**sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Rinse the artichoke hearts well to remove any hint of saltiness, pat dry and put in a small roasting tin. Drizzle with the oil and roast in the oven for 10 minutes until golden.

Grate the mozzarella cheese and slice the Gorgonzola cheese. Cut the artichoke hearts into quarters.

On a very lightly floured surface, roll out the pizza dough very thinly into a round. Place on an oiled baking sheet.

Put the mozzarella cheese, Gorgonzola cheese and artichoke hearts on the pizza base. Sprinkle over the Parmesan cheese, pine nuts and sage and season with salt and pepper.

Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes until golden and bubbling.





## Pizza Norcina

### *Pizza Norcina*

*I first enjoyed this pizza in Norcina, in Umbria, which is famous for truffles. It was so good that I returned the following day for another. I have been truffle hunting in Umbria – all dressed up in hunting gear. It is a real occasion and is taken very seriously. To get a good truffle is a real prize and it becomes a talking point for months on end.*

#### **SERVES 4**

► **Making pizza dough**  
1 hour 45 minutes

► **Preparation**  
25 minutes

► **Cooking**  
30 minutes

**1 quantity of pizza dough (see following page)**

**200g dried sliced porcini mushrooms or a combination of porcini and fresh flat mushrooms**

**250g mozzarella cheese**

**2 tbsp olive oil**

**1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed**

**sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**25g truffle condiment**

Soak the porcini in warm water for about 20 minutes to reconstitute. Slice the fresh mushrooms. Grate the mozzarella cheese.

Drain the porcini and pat dry. Heat the oil in a medium frying pan, add the porcini and fresh mushrooms and fry until softened. Add the garlic, salt and pepper.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. On a very lightly floured surface, roll out the pizza dough very thinly into a round. Place on an oiled baking sheet.

Top the pizza base with the mushrooms and cheese then add the little mounds of truffle condiment. (Truffle condiment, sold in jars, is available in good delicatessens. It is expensive, so this pizza is for special occasions.)

Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes until golden and bubbling. Serve immediately.



## Pizza with goats' cheese, thyme and walnut oil

### *Pizza con formaggio di capra, timo e olio di noci*

*I usually buy a wedge of a hard goats' cheese from a local deli, but I sometimes buy pre-packed from the supermarket. The garlic is simmered in water until soft, which makes the flavour more subtle.*

#### **SERVES 4**

► **Making pizza dough**  
1 hour 45 minutes

► **Preparation**  
10 minutes

► **Cooking**  
35 minutes

**1 quantity of pizza dough (see following page)**

**4 garlic cloves, peeled**

**4 plum tomatoes**

**175g soft goats' cheese**

**50g pine nuts**

**3 tbsp walnut oil**

**sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**handful of fresh thyme, chopped**

Put the garlic cloves in a small saucepan, cover with water and simmer for 10-15 minutes, until soft.

Meanwhile, slice the tomatoes and goats' cheese. Italian Taleggio cheese is good alternative if goat's cheese is not to your taste. Toast the pine nuts on a sheet of foil under the grill, turning them frequently. When the garlic cloves are soft, drain and, using a fork, mash into a purée.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. On a very lightly floured surface, roll out the pizza dough very thinly into a round. Place on an oiled baking sheet.

Sprinkle the rolled out dough with half of the walnut oil. Arrange the sliced tomatoes on the pizza and dot with the garlic purée. Arrange the cheese slices on top. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, the remaining oil and the pine nuts.

Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes until golden and bubbling. Serve sprinkled with chopped thyme. ►





## Pizza dough

### *L'impasto per pizza*

- SERVES 4**  
**► Preparation**  
 15 minutes  
**► Proving**  
 90 minutes
- 15g fresh yeast, or 1½ tsp fast-action dried yeast, added to around 4 tbsp water and mixed well**  
**150ml water**  
**250g strong white unbleached flour, ideally Italian '00' grade flour**  
**½ tsp sea salt**  
**50ml extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra to oil bowl**

Sift the flour and salt together. Make a well in the centre, and add the oil, yeast liquid and some of the water. Mix together with a wooden spoon, gradually adding the remaining water to form a soft dough.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead vigorously for 10 minutes until the dough is soft and satiny (don't be afraid of adding more flour if it's too sticky, or a little water if too dry).

Lightly oil a large bowl, then roll the dough around to cover the surface of the bowl with oil. Cover the bowl with a clean tea towel and leave in a warm place for 1½ hours until doubled in size.

Uncover the bowl and press down on the dough with your knuckles to knock out most of the air. Divide in half – this quantity makes two bases.

Knead on a lightly floured surface for 2-3 minutes to knock out the remaining air bubbles. On a very lightly floured surface, roll out the dough very, very thinly to a diameter of around 26-30cm.





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# Easter Recipes

Easter in Italy is marked with special seasonal dishes, some of which represent Christ's sacrifice, while others simply celebrate great springtime ingredients. **Ursula Ferrigno** selects some traditional recipes for all the family to enjoy...

## Olive bread with onion

### *Pane alle olive con cipolle*

➤ **SERVES** 6-8 ➤ **PREPARATION** 1 hour 20 minutes plus 1 hour 20 minutes standing ➤ **COOKING** 25 minutes

*The onions of Tropea in Calabria are delicious, so if you come across them be sure to snap them up on the spot. This bread also tastes good toasted the next day.*

#### FOR THE DOUGH

15g fresh yeast

275ml warm water

500g strong flour  
or Italian '00' flour

5g salt

2 tbsp olive oil,  
plus extra for oiling

70g olives, Gaeta  
work well, stoned,  
sliced and drained

#### FOR THE FILLING

2 tbsp olive oil

3 red onions, peeled  
and chopped

2 bay leaves

1 sprig fresh  
rosemary, leaves  
picked from the  
stalks

2 tbsp red-wine  
vinegar

55g soft brown  
sugar

to finish

a few fresh  
rosemary leaves

olive oil

rock salt

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Sieve the flour onto a dry work surface and make a well in the centre. Add the salt and oil. Gradually add the yeast solution and mix in the flour to form a dough. Knead by hand for 10-15 minutes, until smooth and elastic.

Add the olives and knead the dough until evenly distributed. The best way to pit olives is to put the olives on your work surface and hold the flat side of a knife on them. Give the knife a gentle whack with the other hand. This will split the olives, allowing you to remove the stone.

Lightly oil a bowl large enough to allow the dough to double in bulk. Put the dough in the bowl and cover with a cloth, for 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, to make the onion filling, heat the olive oil and add the onions, bay leaves and rosemary. Brown the onions over a medium-

low heat, stirring regularly to prevent sticking. Add the vinegar and stir to de-glaze the pan. Add the sugar and cook over a low heat for 30 minutes. The mixture should be thick, shiny and rich red in colour. Cool completely.

Knock back the dough, divide in two and shape each piece into a ball. Leave to relax for 10 minutes. Using a rolling pin, roll each ball out into a long, flat oval shape. Place half the onion mixture and a few rosemary leaves slightly off centre on each piece. Fold each over and pinch the edges together. Lightly brush the tops with the olive oil and sprinkle over rock salt and rosemary.

Place the two dough pieces on a lightly greased baking tray and prove for 40 minutes. Heat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Bake for 25 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven, brush with olive oil and cool on a wire rack.





## Herb roast leg of lamb

### *Cosciotto d'agnello arrosto con erbe aromatiche*

► **SERVES** 10 ► **PREPARATION** 10 minutes ► **COOKING** 3 hours plus 30 minutes resting

Fragrant with many herbs, this special Easter Sunday dish is also enjoyed on other occasions. In my family Easter gatherings are large get-togethers – hence the size of the leg. Feel free to scale down.

1 leg of lamb (about 3kg),  
whole or boned and tied

3 cloves of garlic

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp dried sage

1 tbsp dried rosemary

1 tbsp dried marjoram

1 tbsp dried basil

1 tsp dried thyme

550ml meat stock, home-made is best

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

30 shallots peeled

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.

With a sharp paring knife make three 1-inch slits in the lamb and place a garlic clove into each slit.

In a bowl combine the herbs and spread over the lamb. Pour the stock into a roasting pan, put the lamb on a rack in the pan, and add the onions. Roast the lamb in the oven for 30 minutes. Lower the temperature to 170°C/Gas Mark 3 and continue to roast the lamb for 2-2½

hours, or for 18-30 minutes per 500g total cooking time, depending on how well you like your meat done.

Remove the lamb from the pan and let it rest, loosely covered with punctured aluminium foil, for about 15-30 minutes before carving. Pour the pan juices into a container and put into the freezer.

Just before serving, take the pan juices from the freezer, remove the fat from the surface and warm the pan juices. Slice the lamb and serve it with some of the juice and the onions. Serve the remaining juices on the side.





## Savoury mushroom and bean cake

### *Polpettone di funghi e fagiolini*

► **SERVES** 6 ► **PREPARATION** 30 minutes ► **COOKING** 1 hour

*It's an odd idea, this savoury cake, but it works well and is very tasty. We often include this Ligurian speciality from Genoa in our picnic on the day after Easter Monday. I make this recipe for my family frequently. Feel free to use broccoli instead of beans.*

**55g dried porcini or 100g field mushrooms**

**450g French beans**

**sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**55g crust-less white country-type bread**

**100ml whole milk, plus 4 tbsp**

**5 tbsp olive oil**

**2 garlic cloves,  
peeled and very finely chopped**

**1 tbsp chopped fresh marjoram**

**a handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley,  
chopped**

**4 large free-range eggs**

**25g ricotta cheese**

**4 tbsp mascarpone**

**55g Parmesan cheese, freshly grated**

**40g dried white breadcrumbs, plus more  
for the tin**

Soak the porcini in cold water for 15 minutes. Dry them with kitchen paper and chop coarsely. If using field mushrooms just chop them finely without soaking.

Top and tail the beans and wash them. Plunge into plenty of boiling salted water and cook them for just over 5 minutes. Drain and refresh under cold water and then drain again thoroughly. Now chop coarsely by hand. Put the bread in a bowl, add the milk and leave to soak.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4. Heat half the olive oil, the garlic, marjoram and parsley in a frying pan. Add the soaked porcini (or field mushrooms) and beans and sauté gently for 2-3 minutes.

Squeeze the excess milk out of the bread, and add the bread to the bean mixture, crumbling it through your fingers. Continue to fry for 5 minutes.

Beat the eggs together lightly in a large bowl. Crumble in the ricotta, then add the mascarpone, Parmesan, dried breadcrumbs and some salt and pepper. Add the 4 tbsp of milk. Now add the contents of the frying pan to the cheese bowl and mix thoroughly. Taste and check the seasoning.

Grease a 20cm springform cake tin with a little of the remaining olive oil. Sprinkle with enough breadcrumbs to cover the surface. Spoon the bean mixture into the prepared tin and pour over the remaining olive oil in a thin stream. Bake for about 40 minutes. Allow to cool in the tin. Serve warm or cold.



# Apricot almond shortbread

## *Frollini di albicocche e mandorle*

► **SERVES** 8-10 ► **PREPARATION** 1 hour 20 minutes ► **COOKING** 40 minutes

115g unsalted butter, softened

115g caster sugar

1 egg

100g self-raising flour

100g plain white flour or

'00' Italian flour

### FOR THE FILLING

40g unsalted butter

2 tbsp caster sugar

1 egg yolk

2-3 drops of pure vanilla extract

25g ground almonds

2 tbsp plain flour or '00' Italian flour

225g fresh apricots

### for the topping

115g ground almonds

3 tbsp caster sugar

2 egg yolks

1 tbsp Amaretto

4 egg whites

115g apricot conserve

55g flaked almonds, toasted

To make the shortcake, beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl until light and creamy. Beat in the egg. Stir in the self-raising and plain flour. On a floured surface, knead lightly until smooth. Wrap in greaseproof paper and chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Beat the butter, sugar, egg yolk and vanilla extract in a small bowl until light and fluffy. Stir in the ground almonds and flour. Blitz the apricots in a food processor until smooth. Gently fold into the almond mixture.

Preheat the oven to 170°C/Gas Mark 3. Grease and line a deep 20cm loose-bottomed cake tin. Divide the dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, roll out each half to a 20cm round. Place one round into the prepared tin. Spread the filling mixture over the dough, to within 1cm of the edge. Place the second round of dough over the apricot mixture and press the edges together.

Brush with water, then bake for 30-35 minutes until pale golden brown. Leave to stand for 15 minutes before turning out onto

a wire rack to cool. Remove the paper lining carefully and place on a baking tray. Turn the oven up to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.

To make the topping, put the almonds and sugar in a bowl. In a small bowl, mix the egg yolks and Amaretto, then stir into the almond mixture. Whisk 2 of the egg whites until stiff. Fold a quarter of the mixture into the whisked egg whites. Mix well and spread over the sides of the shortcake. Whisk the remaining egg whites until stiff and fold into the reserved almond mixture. Spoon into a piping bag, fitted with a star nozzle. Pipe zigzags over the top of the shortcake and spread the remainder around the edge. Bake for 8-10 minutes, until the top is lightly browned.

Meanwhile, heat the apricot conserve until melted, then sieve into a bowl. Spoon two-thirds of the conserve between the zigzag lines and leave to cool for 10 minutes. Spread the sides with the remaining apricot conserve and coat with the toasted almonds. Leave to cool before serving.





# Pronto!

Educated in Italy, **Valentina Harris** brought her qualifications for teaching and cooking from Rome to London in 1976. Her Anglo-Italian springtime suppers are fabulously tasty – and ready in under an hour...



## Tagliolini with Parmesan cheese, parsley and cream

*Tagliolini con Parmigiano, prezzemolo e panna*

This delicately flavoured pasta dish is simplicity itself. If you serve it on its own, it will make a filling starter. With salad and some Italian bread, it becomes a complete meal. Use good-quality fresh pasta to cut down on time, because it cooks very quickly, although you can also use dried durum pasta if you have more time.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 5 minutes
- **COOKING** 5 minutes

**200g fresh tagliolini or spaghetti**

**sea salt**

**3 tbsp single cream**

**3 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

**6 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan cheese**

**freshly milled black pepper**

Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a rolling boil. When the water boils, toss in the pasta, then stir, cover and return to the boil. Remove the lid. Boil for about 2 minutes, or until tender, then drain.

Return the pasta to the saucepan and mix in the cream, then add the parsley and the Parmesan and mix again. Reserve a little of the flat-leaf parsley and Parmesan cheese to garnish the finished dish if you like. Season with as much freshly milled black pepper as you like, then transfer to a warmed platter and serve.



## Pork fillet with leeks

*Filetto di maiale ai porri*

Serve with a mash of whatever you fancy – I like sweet potato and celeriac, but this can be a bit time-consuming.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 30 minutes

**300g pork fillet, cut into thick slices**

**2 tbsp plain white flour**

**2 leeks, trimmed, white part only**

**2 tbsp sunflower oil**

**fine sea salt and freshly milled black pepper**

**a small pinch of dried sage**

**4 tbsp dry white wine**

**2 tsp lemon juice**

**1 tsp lemon zest**

Trim the pork carefully and roll it in the flour to cover it lightly. Cut the leeks in half, then cut into small sections crossways and lengthways to produce rough squares of about 2cm. Rinse the leeks thoroughly and dry them in a tea towel or on kitchen paper.

Put the leeks in a deep sauté pan with the oil, season thoroughly and add the sage. Mix together and fry gently until the leeks are softened and lightly browned. Raise the heat and add the meat, turning it over frequently until browned all over. Add the wine, the lemon juice and zest, stir and lower the heat. Remove half the leeks and set aside. Cover the meat and simmer very gently for about 20 minutes, or until the meat is cooked through and completely tender.

When the meat is cooked, remove it and keep it warm to one side. Liquidise the leeks left in the sauté pan in a blender, then return to the pan with the meat and the leeks you removed earlier. Heat through for about 5 minutes, turning frequently. Take out the meat and arrange it on a dish. Pour the leeks and sauce all over the slices.





## Escalopes with white wine and orange

### *Scaloppine al vino bianco e arancia*

Serve with mashed potatoes and – from the freezer, or a little later in the season – fresh green beans.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 15 minutes

2 veal or turkey escalopes, trimmed  
 1½ tbsp plain white flour  
 1½ tbsp unsalted butter  
 sea salt and freshly milled black pepper  
 50ml dry white wine  
 grated zest and juice of ½ orange  
 chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish

Cut each escalope in half and flatten with a meat mallet, covering with clingfilm to prevent tearing. Coat the meat in the flour, shake off any excess.

Heat half the butter in a frying pan and seal the meat on both sides. Pour over the wine and turn the meat in the wine as it boils off. When the meat is cooked through, season, then remove and keep warm. Add the orange juice and zest to the pan, stir and whisk the rest of the butter into the liquid.

Return the meat to the pan, heat through quickly, then transfer meat and sauce on to a warm platter and serve at once, sprinkled with the parsley.



## Risotto with pancetta and leeks

### *Risotto con pancetta e porri*

The taste of pancetta is very distinctive and quite different from bacon. Fortunately it is very widely available these days, so you really should not have any trouble finding it. If you are unlucky and cannot find it, the only possible substitute for this recipe is really top-quality, green streaky bacon.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 35 minutes

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
 1 leek, washed and finely chopped  
 75g finely sliced pancetta, chopped  
 200g arborio rice  
 1 litre chicken or vegetable stock, kept simmering  
 50g unsalted butter  
 50g freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
 sea salt and freshly milled black pepper  
 4 pancetta or streaky bacon rashers, grilled until crisp

Fry the oil, leek and pancetta together thoroughly until the leeks are cooked through and soft. Add the rice and stir thoroughly to coat all the grains. Then begin to add the hot stock, stirring constantly and allowing the liquid to be absorbed before adding more. Continue to cook the rice in this way, making sure that the rice always absorbs the stock before you add more liquid.

When the risotto is creamy and velvety, but the rice grains are still firm to the bite, take it off the heat. Stir in the butter and cheese and adjust the seasoning. Cover and leave to rest for about 3 minutes. Stir again and transfer on to a warmed platter. Serve at once with the grilled rashers laid on top of the risotto.



## Baked mackerel fillets

### *Filetti di sgombero al forno*

This is delicious at any time of the year, but I particularly like it in early spring with creamy mashed potato.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 15 minutes

2 large mackerel, cut into 4 fillets  
 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
 2 tbsp soft white breadcrumbs  
 1 tbsp salted capers, chopped  
 2 large anchovy fillets, rinsed, chopped  
 1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped  
 2 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
 1 tbsp pine nuts, chopped  
 2 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan or pecorino cheese  
 fine sea salt and ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Trim, wash and pat dry the fish. Use a third of the oil to grease an ovenproof dish in which the 4 fillets as 'sandwiches' will fit snugly side by side.

Place 2 fillets in the dish on top of the oil, skin side down. Mix together half of the remaining oil with the breadcrumbs, capers, garlic, parsley, pine nuts and cheese. Season to taste. Go easy on the salt as the capers, anchovies and cheese are quite salty.

Put this mixture on top of the 2 fillets in the dish, pressing down quite firmly to secure it. Lay the other 2 fillets on top and press down. Leftover filling can be sprinkled over the top.

Drizzle over the rest of the oil and sprinkle lightly with 2 tbsp of cold water or dry white wine. Bake in the top part of the oven for about 15 minutes, then rest for 3 minutes on top of the stove or on the kitchen table before serving.



# SWEET TREATS

Easter is very nearly upon us, and the festival of *Pasqua* is serious business in Italy, with **parades and processions** throughout the country. Though it's also a time for sweet treats and, of course, chocolate...

**E**aster wouldn't be *Pasqua* without chocolate. The celebration of the resurrection of Christ goes hand in hand with everyone's favourite sweet treat, right from the Italian capitals of chocolate – Perugia, home of *baci*, and Alba, where Pietro Ferrero founded Ferrero SpA in 1946 – to the isles of the Bay of Naples. It was, almost certainly, Pietro's son Michele Ferrero who made Italian chocolate world famous. He was the man who used vegetable oil and hazelnut paste to 'pad out' expensive chocolate to make Nutella.

Sadly, Michele passed away on Valentine's Day of this year, though his legacy, and the massive company he helped forge (Ferrero is the world's second-largest confectionary business) will no doubt remain at the forefront of chocolate production for as long as there is a passion and a hunger for the dark brown stuff. In this issue of *Italia!* and in memory of Michele, we've gathered a selection of our favourite Easter treats to sample.

## GIANDUIOTTI MILK & HAZELNUT CHOCOLATES

From Carluccio's stores

Price £5.95 for a small bag, or £10.95 for a larger box

The very finest quality chocolate is combined with Piedmont's famous hazelnuts – ground to a paste – and piped out through a triangular nozzle to form what are known as Gianduiotti. Dating back to Turin during the 19th century, these are deliciously rich and smooth with an almost creamy texture. The combination of nut paste and chocolate is quite intoxicating, in this instance with a very fine balance of flavours – neither too 'chocolatey' nor too 'nutty'. They're absolutely perfect with a strong after-dinner espresso, though can equally be enjoyed on their own. If you're feeling indulgent, then sample with a chilled glass of Vin Santo. No, they're not cheap, but this is Italian chocolate at its best.

**VERDICT ★★★★★**

Perfect with an after-dinner coffee, this combination of chocolate and hazelnut paste from Carluccio's is to die for.



## 1 CARLUCCIO'S EASTER COLOMBA CAKE

From Carluccio's

[www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)

Price £13.95

The traditional Easter Colomba cake is very much like a rich *panettone*, though iced and coated with almonds as well as being laden with sweet fruit. This one from Carluccio's is melt-in-the-mouth perfect. Colomba means 'dove' in Italian, and the cake is shaped to resemble the feathered creature – although you'd be hard pressed to spot it if you weren't in the know! Great with a cappuccino.

**VERDICT ★★★★★**

A fantastic traditional Easter gift, this Colomba cake is both tasty and indulgent. Perfect with a mid-morning coffee or glass of Prosecco.

## 2 THE FERRERO COLLECTION

From Waitrose

[www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)

Price £10.45

Dodgy television advertising aside (who could forget the ambassador's party?), Ferrero Rocher chocolate are a world-favourite. This box comprises three types: the 'ordinary' milk chocolate variety, plus dark chocolate and milk chocolate variations. The dark ones are our favourites: rich, though succulent and satisfying. A great way to end a dinner party. Just don't let your guests get in the "you're spoiling us" gags!

**VERDICT ★★★★★**

Three varieties of one of the world's favourite chocolates in one box. All great, though we definitely think the dark ones are the best.





3



4



5



6

### 3 D. BARBERO CHOCOLATE COATED BREADSTICKS

From Italian delis across the UK  
Price (typical) £5.99

When *Italia!* conducted its tasting of the products on these pages, nothing divided opinion like these dark-chocolate coated breadsticks. They were the Italian equivalent of Marmite. Half of the panel though they were delicious, if rather rich (the chocolate is very intense), whilst others considered them 'dry' and too savoury. Perhaps a treat to enjoy with a sweet, milky cup of coffee, or with an after-dinner espresso.

#### VERDICT ★★★

Love them or loathe them, these chocolate-coated breadsticks are rich – perhaps too so to eat without being partnered with coffee.

### 4 BACI

From Italian delis across the UK  
Price (typical) £12.99 for a 143g bag

Ah, the kisses! A must-try for all lovers of chocolate, Perugia's famous *baci* are a delicious combination of whole hazelnut coated in milk chocolate. Make sure you get hold of the original Italian variety (blue bag) rather than the UK-produced version (red bag). The Italian *baci* are far, far better, using only quality hazelnuts from Piedmont. Most Italian delis stock them, and many sell the sweets individually (for around 50p each) for you to enjoy with your morning coffee.

#### VERDICT ★★★★★

Another world-renowned chocolate offering, and the fame bestowed on *baci* is deserved. The best thing to come out of Perugia?

### 5 DORIA AMARETTI BISCUITS

From Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco and Asda  
Price £1.99

Enjoyed the whole year round – not just during the Easter celebrations – *amaretti* biscuits are an Italian staple to be taken with a coffee or a small tipple of sweet wine. Flavoured with almond, these examples from Doria are soft and fragrant, with a delicately crunchy texture. They're not overpowering as some *amaretti* can be – they're subtle in flavour, though still as sweet as you like. They taste really good with Vin Santo.

#### VERDICT ★★★

Doesn't everyone love an *amaretto* biscuit with their coffee? These have a subtle flavour and go really well with a glass of dessert wine.

### 6 CARLUCCIO'S DARK CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

From Carluccio's  
[www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)  
Price £10.95, 600g

This was another sweet treat that really split our opinions. Whereas some of the tasting panel thought they were delicious, the rest thought they were too 'dry' and 'crunchy' to be considered a truffle. Deeply dark and dense, these chocolates really have to be enjoyed with a coffee. On their own they're just too intense. Given their dark chocolate, rather than milk, they're also quite sweet.

#### VERDICT ★★★

Another love-or-loathe product, these are very dark, though sweet, and some felt they were too intense and a tad 'dry' in the mouth.



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## THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS



**DAWN CAVANAGH-HOBBS** is co-founder of the successful fractional ownership company Appassionata Ltd, a UK-based development business that specialises in the restoration and creation

of unique properties in the stunning region of Le Marche. [info@appassionata.com](mailto:info@appassionata.com)  
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**ROBERT HOFSTEEDE** is a registered and licensed real estate agent in Le Marche, and Managing Director of Marche Property Net. His partner, Monique de Veer, has been running the holiday rental

agency Le Marche Explorer for over 15 years.  
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**LAURA PROTTI** is dual qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor. She has extensive experience in Italian property law, international private law, contract law, succession law, and

taxation, and has assisted with the drafting and updating of books and articles on Italian Law. [www.leplaw.co.uk](http://www.leplaw.co.uk)



**MARK SWIFT** is Marketing Manager at De'Longhi UK and has a wealth of knowledge about coffee. De'Longhi make some of the best coffee machines on the market today – to see

the full range of options for home coffee machines see their website at [www.seriousaboutcoffee.com](http://www.seriousaboutcoffee.com)



*Dawn with her first rescue horse, Nikita*

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Our experts are here to help with all your questions about Italy. Email your questions to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com), or write to us at our usual address, as given on page 18

## RELOCATING TO ITALY

**Q** *I am shortly looking to relocate, selling my house in Reading upon the untimely death of my husband and buying in Italy. What advice would you have regarding making such a significant move?*

*Linda Travers, Reading*

**A** Moving house can be very stressful, but moving to another country is a whole different ball game and sometimes the excitement overshadows the practicalities of relocating. Everything familiar to you has been left behind and in its place is a strange country, with strange cultures and traditions, and locals who don't speak your language!

We moved to Le Marche seven years ago, after a long search. I think myself blessed when I wake up each morning in the heart of our medieval town, Petritoli, but it hasn't been easy – and I wish my language skills had been fluent before the move!

We were determined not to settle into the typical 'expat' life and wanted to experience the real Italy; we were ready to work hard and realise our dream. Over the next couple of years we renovated three properties and planted a vineyard; Appassionata, our fractional ownership business was born two years after arriving in Italy. Our family have worked hard, ensuring we deliver luxurious and unique homes for our owners to enjoy.

Working alongside local builders and artisans was important for us; we didn't want to bring in workers from the UK, as expats often do, and I'm sure this decision boded well with the locals. I also wanted to help support these talented artisans – one in particular, Andrea Ribichini. The Ribichini family make luxury leather handbags for all the top Italian brands; they live in our town and Andrea is the fourth generation of his family to carry on the business. I teamed up with Andrea last year and created Appassionata Boutique, selling beautiful handbags at wholesale prices directly to the public, online.

Both businesses continue to grow and flourish; we don't have much time to spend lazing on the beach or skiing in the mountains,

but we are doing things we love, things we are passionate about. This is important. Not a day goes by that I don't count my blessings, and realise how lucky we are to have found this beautiful place in the world to call home.

*Dawn Cavanagh-Hobbs, Appassionata*  
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## INVESTMENT PROPERTY

**Q** *I am interested in buying a property in either Tuscany, Umbria or Le Marche, but can't decide where to invest. I intend to use the property as a holiday home, though will look to rent it out during the summer months. Can you please advise on respective returns on investment in each of these three regions, both in terms of rental return per summer season and longer-term property price increases? I have a budget of £600,000.*

*Simon Davies, Cardiff*

**A** It is understandable that when you invest in a property or in fact make any investment, you are looking for a good return. However, I say that in Italy you buy more with your heart than with your head. You want to invest in Italy, buying your dream house, because you love the land, the people and the food! Fortunately, Italy offers at the same time good value for money. Of course, there are, investment-wise, differences between the mentioned regions. Very roughly, you could say that Tuscany is a well-established market offering high investment and high return but stiff competition, that Le Marche is up-and-coming, offering a relatively lower investment point but a reasonably good return, and that Umbria is in between.

However, I still would like to advise you to follow your heart first and choose an area where you would like to be. Consider spending some time exploring the various regions, combining business with pleasure and find an area, and a location in that area, where you are happy!

Knowing the three regions quite well, we decided on Le Marche because it truly is the ➤



whole of Italy in one region. We like the combination of 'Monti e Mare' (The Mountains and the Sea) and 'investment-wise' it worked out very well. Our rental company, Le Marche Explorer, which specializes in renting out privately-owned villas, is seeing a year-on-year growth.

What we have noticed is that you have to build up a good reputation, offering top service, a clean house and swimming pool, everything in good working condition, a personal touch and a fair rental rate. Word of mouth will do the rest.

Looking at the long-term perspective concerning property prices, as an estate agent, I notice improvement. The American market looks especially promising with the dollar getting stronger and with healthy economic growth. Moreover, due to the strengthening of the British pound we see more buyers from the UK.

So, buying a property in Italy can be satisfying for your heart and for your head! But you do need to consider your heart first. Where in Italy would you like to live?

**Robert Hofsteede, Marche Property Net**

## IMPORTING OLIVE OIL

**Q** *My grandfather was Italian – he sadly passed away recently – and has left myself and my sister his property and olive groves (approximately 8 hectares) in his will. We live in England (Liverpool) and would like to start importing the olive oil from our newly-inherited property into the UK. What are the legal implications? And do we need permissions from the Italian and UK authorities? Furthermore, what are the tax implications of importing olive oil from Italy into the UK for a small, family-run business?*

**Lisa Hewett, Liverpool**

**A** Food importation is subject to regulations and specific ones apply to certain products; it is important to be aware of them as well as more general rules on labelling and additives. In the EU those involved in the production and sale of olive oil must ensure its labelling and packaging comply with regulations, even when the oil is packaged for sale to the consumer online.

The labels of olive oil products marketed in the UK must contain specific information and comply with European regulations, and must be in English or include an English version. Regulation 29/2012 details what information to put on the label, as well as any permitted optional information.

Article 4 states that 'extra virgin olive oil' and 'virgin olive oil' labels must declare a 'designation of origin,' whereas Article 5 explains how to proceed if you wish to include additional optional information on a label. Regulation 1335/2013, effective from 13 December 2014, introduces further information that must be on the label and further optional information that can be included. Article 4a, for instance, states that the label must describe any special conditions for preserving the oil.

The European regulations also state that olive oil must be sold in a 'sealed' bottle or container that cannot be 're-sealed' after it has been opened. This is to ensure the oil cannot be altered after bottling. Rural Payments Agency (RPA) inspectors can legally carry out inspections at the premises of any olive oil bottlers, marketers, retailers or distributors. They take oil samples and check labels and records. The Import duty for olive oil imported from Italy is 0% + €124.50 per 100 kg plus 10% sales tax.

It is advisable to seek independent specialist advice if you are thinking of importing olive oil products, also for information on UK licenses.

**Laura Protti, LEP Law**

**Laura Protti** is the founder of LEP Law.

She is dual-qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor, and specialises in assisting British and Italian clients with matters relating to Italian law. Visit her website at [www.leplaw.co.uk](http://www.leplaw.co.uk) for more.



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# Coffee Corner

## LATTE ART

**Q** *At my local cafe, there's a very talented barista who creates wonderful patterns in the white of my coffee. I'd love to be able to recreate these patterns at home, to impress my friends and family. Do you have any tips?*  
**Michelle Rossiter, by email**

**A** Latte art is a method of preparing coffee created by pouring steamed milk into a shot of espresso and resulting in a pattern or design on the surface of the resulting latte. It can also be created or embellished by simply 'drawing' in the top layer of foam.

Latte art requires first producing an espresso with 'crema', then frothing milk with microfoam, and then pouring the milk into the coffee to combine foam and crema into a pattern.

Latte art is particularly difficult to create consistently. As the white foam from the milk rises to meet the hazelnut surface of the shot, a contrast is created and the design emerges. As the milk is poured, the foam separates from the liquid and rises to the top. If the milk and espresso shot are just right, and the pitcher is moved during the pour, the foam will rise to create a pattern on the surface.

To achieve the perfect result you need an espresso coffee machine that allows you to use fresh coffee and froth fresh milk using the traditional milk frother. A Traditional Italian pump espresso coffee machine or a bean to cup coffee machine is a good choice.

All De'Longhi coffee machines allow you to froth the milk effortlessly to a microfoam and all machines will allow you to make an espresso with crema.

Crema can be improved by the coffee you use and the process of making an espresso:

- Try coffee with more Robusta type of bean (and less Arabica)
- Ensure the coffee is packed tightly
- Ensure the coffee is ground very fine

The best tip that we can advise is lots of practice! And visit our De'Longhi YouTube website to discover some of the best techniques to create Latte Art. The video De'Longhi Barista Masterclass is especially informative!

**Mark Swift, De'Longhi**

[www.seriousaboutcoffee.com](http://www.seriousaboutcoffee.com)







# THE BEST OF PINOT GRIGIO

It's become a staple of wine bars, pubs and restaurants, but Pinot Grigio can be so much more than that which is sold by the glass. **Paul Pettengale** explores the higher end...

**W**ithout doubt, it's one of the wine world's success stories. Over the past decade Pinot Grigio has gone from being, frankly, something of a joke in terms of quality white wine (think, as has so often been the case with Italian wine production, quantity over quality), to the most expensive white wine you can buy by the glass in your up-market wine bars. It's trendy, it's making Chardonnay (once the darling of the white wine world) look cheap, and – for once – the hype is largely justified.

*These wines are sumptuous expressions of what this little black grape has to offer*

But there is another aspect to Pinot Grigio. A wine merchant friend of mine recently handed me a bottle and said, "Welcome to the other side." I'm not going to mention which one it was, but you'll read about it over the page. Whereas 99 per cent of Pinot Grigio drunk in the UK or US can be picked up for around £5 (or US\$ equivalent) per bottle, there is a selection of fine wines to be crafted from this – once considered humble – grape variety, and these are now – thankfully – being sold outside of the mother country. These wines, which are predominantly from the northeast of Italy, are sumptuous expressions of what this little black (yes, black) grape has to offer. Yes, these wines still demonstrate citrus notes and a degree of acidity, but increasingly producers are able to extract a marvellous minerality and tastes of herbs and spice (see our Discovery of the Month). Pinot Grigio has finally come of age. It is no longer the bottom-of-the-supermarket-shelf rubbish we once had to endure. So turn the page and come celebrate with us what this grape variety can achieve (if you're willing to spend £10-plus). ➤







## MARCO FELLUGA MONGRIS 2013, COLLIO

From **Berkmann Wine Cellars**  
[www.berkmann.co.uk](http://www.berkmann.co.uk)

Price **£17.00**

It's rare indeed that you are in a position to describe a Pinot Grigio wine as possessing a distinctive 'creaminess'. And so this is one of those moments... Yes, there's a citrus snap. Yes, there's a toasted almond finish. And yes, there's the grassy, herbaceous aspect that we associate with the grape variety. But there's a deliciously smooth roundness to this wine that marks it as absolute top-drawer Pinot Grigio. A wine to savour and to enjoy, sip by slow sip.



### GREAT WITH...

If you're spending £17 on a wine, then spend as much on a lobster.

## PINOT GRIGIO 2013, FRANZ HAAS

From **Liberty Wines**

[www.libertywines.co.uk](http://www.libertywines.co.uk)

Price **£15.99**

Nestled in the foothills of the Alps, the Franz Haas winery in the Alto Adige was founded in 1880. The owner is a notoriously difficult wine drinker to please, and his meticulous and discerning approach comes through when you sample the wines that leave his factory gates. Crisp, clean, yet mouth-filling and bursting with ripe citrus fruit, this Pinot Grigio harmonizes the warmth of the summer with the mountain's cooling evening breezes. There's a lingering salty finish that is great with seafood.



### GREAT WITH...

Go to your local fishmonger and order in a couple of dozen oysters.

## PINOT GRIGIO 2013, LAVIS STORIE DI VITE

From **Waitrose**

[www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)

Price **£9.95**

Sometimes, the simpler things are, the better they are. This Pinot Grigio, sourced by the ever-accomplished buyers at Waitrose, is a middle-of-the-road offering, but one that benefits from its lowly stature. It ticks all of the right PG boxes: lemon and lime aromas; crisp, tongue-tickling acidity; a mineral finish; and a go-to approach. Which means you'll want to want to refill your glass as soon as you've supped your last sip. Balanced, with no surprises.



### GREAT WITH...

A Friday evening, get-home-from-work wine to share with your partner.

## PINOT GRIGIO 2013, JERMANN

From **Great Western Wine**

[www.greatwesternwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwesternwine.co.uk)

Price **£20.50**

Now we're talking... The price tag may well make you cough and splutter, but this is Pinot Grigio as the gods would have made it. Take your like-priced Chablis and use it in a sauce, because this PG is a wine to die for. It's rich, yet ably subtle; it's powerful, yet sublime. And it holds its own against the very, very best. It would have been our Discovery of the Month if it weren't for the extraordinary Giardino (see opposite). GWW have come up trumps once again – believe us... Do try this wine.



### GREAT WITH...

Could hold up against meaty fish (turbot, say) with a cream sauce.



# PINOT GRIGIO 2013, NEC OTIUM

From **Berry Bros. & Rudd**  
[www.bbr.com](http://www.bbr.com)

Price **£9.75**

Rejoice in the new! This wine from one of London's oldest importers of tipples is a foil to traditional-style Pinot Grigios that have been sampled time and again. Super-fresh, it zings in the mouth. Apple peel and lemon zest aromas tantalize whilst creamy fruit and herb tastes reward. A stunning wine for the price – it's just a shame you can't pick up Pinot Grigio of this quality from your local supermarket. Buy a couple of bottles, take them to your next dinner party and show off to your friends!



## GREAT WITH...

A nice green salad, sprinkled with toasted pine and chopped basil.

# PINOT GRIGIO CLASSICI DOC 2013, COLTERENZIO

From **Great Western Wine**  
[www.greatwesternwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwesternwine.co.uk)

Price **£13.50**

Great Western Wine have an incredible selection of Italian wine offerings, but we reckon this to be one of their best in terms of affordability against quality. For sure, £13.50 for a wine isn't cheap, but it's cheaper than most delivery pizzas and a hundred times more enjoyable. It's really fresh, yet retains a depth of character that distinguishes it from most Pinot Grigio. It has a slightly spicy twang to it that makes it ideal with shellfish, so whether with prawns or mussels, enjoy!



## GREAT WITH...

A few shelled jumbo prawns tossed in olive oil, garlic and a chopped chilli.

# PINOT GRIGIO 'RAMATO' 2013, SPECOGNA

From **Liberty Wines**  
[www.libertywines.co.uk](http://www.libertywines.co.uk)

Price **£18.99**

Pinot Grigio is, of course a red grape variety, despite the fact that the vast majority of wines that are made of it are white. There are a few rosé wines, and they're increasingly in demand, but this wine from Specogna is an oddity. Neither white nor rosé, it's a pale 'blush'. But boy, is it good! Introducing a hint of strawberry to the PG's renowned citrus flavours, it provides a real lift in complexity and creativity. This is a wine to savour, and one to cherish.



## GREAT WITH...

Pale, soft, young cheeses, though be careful not to overpower it.

# VIGNE IL GIARDINO PINOT GRIGIO 2013

From **Majestic Wine**  
[www.majestic.co.uk](http://www.majestic.co.uk)

Price **£9.95**

Every now and again you open up a bottle of wine, you pour a glass, take a sip and you have one of those 'Oh, my God' moments. They are, admittedly, pretty rare. But this wine provided one of those epiphanies. And the reason? It's so, so, incredibly savoury. Pinot Grigio is hardly renowned for being sweet – quite the opposite – but this wine is distinctive in its ability to open up the herb box and deliver on every level. Impressed? We're still waiting to close our open jaws.



## GREAT WITH...

Grilled flat fish such as lemon or Dover sole, or maybe steamed sea bass.



Photograph © iStock



# NEXT MONTH IN ITALIA!

## LIVING THE TUSCAN DREAM

Your property guide to the most popular region in Italy

### THE ANCIENT CITY OF FERRARA

Exploring the history of the  
walled Renaissance marvel

### WORLD EXPO IN MILAN

We preview one of the most  
important global conventions

### 48 HOURS IN THE VAL D'AOSTA

What to see and do in the  
famous northern valley

**PLUS** Our usual  
collection of must-  
eat recipes, Barbera  
wines from Asti  
and Alba, grissini  
tasted, more Fast  
Culture and Fast  
Art, homes to buy  
in Abruzzo and  
much, much more!

Contents may be subject to change

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DON'T MISS ITALIA! ISSUE 126 ON SALE 9 APRIL



# IN PRINT

This month we encounter a pair of books featuring **two of Italy's most popular cities**. First a new guide to spending time in Rome, and then a new translation of a novel based in the country's watery city...



## ◀ PERFECT DAYS IN ROME

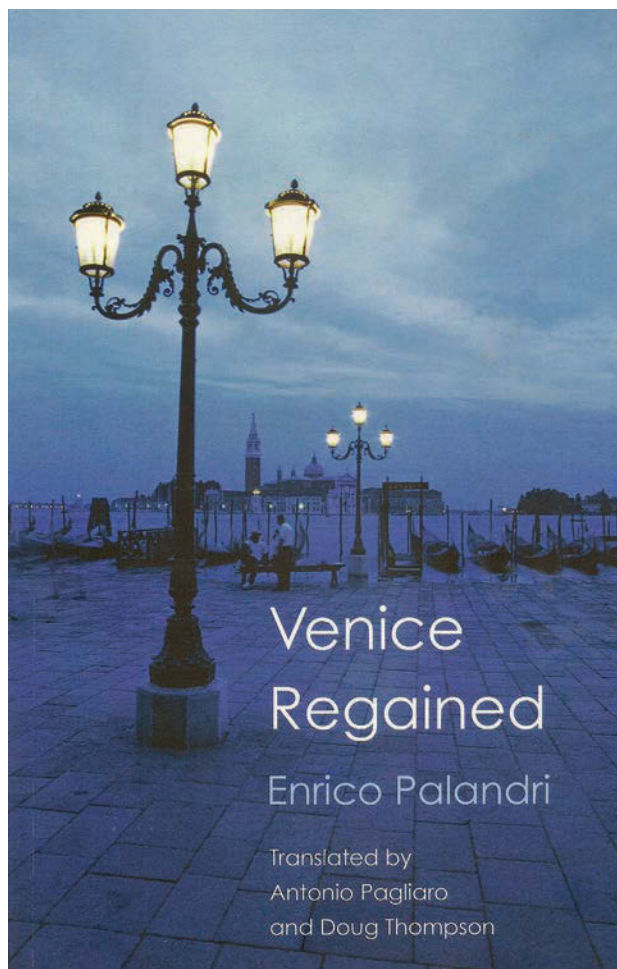
Marco Polo, £9.99 (spiralback)

The Marco Polo city guides are excellent starting points for any trip to an unknown destination... We love the 'First Two Hours' and 'Getting Your Bearings' sections, which give you an instant and easily-digestible introduction to places that can be pretty overwhelming to the uninitiated. The rest of this 220-page spiral-bound book leads you through Rome's various districts, tourist attractions and must-see visits. It also includes a map of the city's underground system and a road map that's separately contained so you can pull it out and put it in your pocket or purse. This is a guide that is easy and entertaining to read, well-written and authoritative. It's also packed with fantastic photography and many district-based maps so, no matter where you are in Italy's capital, you're going to feel safe and on top of your game. Whereas most guide books simply present you with a list places to visit, this breaks the city of Rome down into timed (daily) itineraries, making it both unique and essential.

## VENICE REGAINED

Enrico Palandri (translated by Antonio Pagliaro and Doug Thompson), Troubadour, £8.99 (paperback) ▶

This is top-drawer Italian fiction, now translated into English, that spans several decades and details how broken marriages have resultant complex implications brought to bear on the children they've spawned. It is an examination of family relationships and that of how the fascination with fame (in this instance, of a principal character) can influence children as well as spouses, often with devastating and life-changing results. Based partly in England and largely in Venice, it encompasses modern Italian politics as much as the internal turbulence of family life that is presented as both fragile and yet enduring.





# ITALY FLIGHT GUIDE

Let *Italia!*'s flight guide take the hard work out of **planning your trip**. Just pick your ideal destination from our handy map of Italy and locate the corresponding number from the list.

DESTINATION	ORIGIN	OPERATOR
<b>1 Alghero</b>	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	Thomson
	LDN Luton	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Thomson*
<b>2 Ancona</b>	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>3 Bari</b>	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>4 Bergamo</b>	Bristol	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Knock Ireland West	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Ryanair
<b>5 Bologna</b>	Bristol	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Ryanair
<b>6 Brindisi</b>	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>7 Cagliari</b>	LDN Gatwick	Meridiana, BA
	LDN Stansted	easyJet
<b>8 Catania</b>	Bristol	easyJet*
	Birmingham	Thomson
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Norwegian, Thomson
	LDN Luton	easyJet
<b>9 Comiso</b>	Manchester	easyJet, Thomson
<b>9 Comiso</b>	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>10 Florence</b>	Birmingham	Flybe
	LDN Gatwick	Vueling
	LDN City	BA, CityJet
<b>11 Genoa</b>	LDN Gatwick	BA
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>12 Lamezia</b>	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>13 Milan</b>	Birmingham	BA, Flybe
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	Edinburgh	easyJet

DESTINATION	ORIGIN	OPERATOR
<b>13 Milan (continued)</b>	LDN City	Air France, Alitalia
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Heathrow	Alitalia, BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	Manchester	BA, Flybe
	Southampton	Flybe*
<b>14 Naples</b>	Birmingham	Thomson
	Bristol	easyJet, Thomson
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	East Midlands	Thomson
	Edinburgh	easyJet
	Glasgow	Thomson
	Leeds Bradford	Monarch
	Liverpool	easyJet
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Meridiana, Thomson
	LDN Luton	easyJet, Monarch, Thomson*
	LDN Stansted	easyJet
<b>15 Olbia</b>	Manchester	Monarch, Thomson
	Newcastle	Thomson
	Bristol	easyJet
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet, Meridiana
<b>16 Palermo</b>	LDN Heathrow	BA*
	LDN Luton	easyJet
<b>16 Palermo</b>	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>17 Parma</b>	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>18 Perugia</b>	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>19 Pescara</b>	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>20 Pisa</b>	Belfast	Jet2
	Bournemouth	Ryanair
	Bristol	easyJet
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	East Midlands	Jet2, Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	Glasgow Prestwick	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2, Ryanair
	Liverpool	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
<b>20 Pisa</b>	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2, easyJet**

Every effort is made to ensure that the above **flight information** is correct, but do check specific flights before you plan your trip. Some routes may be seasonal.



DESTINATION	ORIGIN	OPERATOR
<b>20 Pisa (continued)</b>	Newcastle	Jet2
<b>21 Rome</b>	Belfast	Jet2
	Birmingham	Monarch
	Bristol	easyJet
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	Glasgow	Jet2
	Glasgow Prestwick	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2
	LDN City	Alitalia
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Norwegian, Vueling*
	LDN Heathrow	Alitalia, BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet, Monarch
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2, Ryanair
	Newcastle	Jet2
<b>22 Trapani</b>	Manchester	Ryanair
<b>23 Trieste</b>	Birmingham	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>24 Turin</b>	Birmingham	Monarch
	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2
<b>25 Venice/Treviso</b>	Birmingham	Monarch
	Bristol	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Jet2
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2, Ryanair
	LDN City	BA
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Monarch, Thomson
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	LDN Southend	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	easyJet, Jet2, Monarch, Thomson
	Newcastle	Jet2
<b>26 Verona</b>	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	Edinburgh	Jet2
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Monarch
	Manchester	Monarch
	Southampton	Flybe

\* Starts May 2015, \*\* Starts June 2015



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- Edinburgh ☎ 0844 481 8989
- Glasgow ☎ 0844 481 5555
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- Knock ☎ +353 94 936 8100
- Leeds Bradford ☎ 0871 288 2288
- Liverpool ☎ 0871 521 8484
- LDN City ☎ 020 7646 0088
- LDN Gatwick ☎ 0844 335 1802
- LDN Heathrow ☎ 0844 335 1801
- LDN Luton ☎ 01582 405100
- LDN Southend ☎ 01702 538500
- LDN Stansted ☎ 0844 335 1803
- Manchester ☎ 0871 271 0711
- Newcastle ☎ 0871 882 1121
- Southampton ☎ 0844 481 7777

*Always check with your airline before planning your flight.*

Some of these operators may charge a premium rate for phone bookings. Check before you call.











# My Italia!

Author **Lexa Dudley** has been visiting Sardinia since 1972 and has set her first novel on the island...

## WHEN DID YOU START VISITING SARDINIA? AND WHY THAT ISLAND?

We went to Sardinia completely by chance; it was the spring of 1972 and my husband had a small health scare and needed a family holiday. We wanted a Mediterranean island and chose Corsica as I spoke French. A friend who was a travel agent rang to say Corsica was full but he had booked us into a new hotel in Pula in the south of Sardinia. We had to look it up on the map, as Sardinia was still 'the forgotten island'. From the moment I arrived at the small airport at Elmas I knew Sardinia would live in my heart and become the home of my soul. During the two weeks we were there we were shown amazing hospitality from the Sards and resolved to go back the following year. We have been back every year since. Now, being semi-retired, we go back at least three times a year, which is wonderful. If I am lucky I have a long weekend on my own so I can visit all the wonderful museums up in the old part called *Casteddu* in Cagliari.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AS BEING SARDINIA'S GREATEST ASPECTS?

First, the people are friendly and welcoming; they have a natural curiosity which is engaging. They have a pride in their land and their traditions, which is why they have held onto their culture and languages with such a fervent tenacity. The whole island is like an open museum with its Ancient sites and Roman remains. The landscape is breath-taking with its majestic mountains, enchanting and mystic places and sacred wells. The beaches are beautiful with white sands and crystal clear water. Even in the height of the season it is possible to find a small beach on one's own. Once you have visited Sardinia you will find it difficult not to return.

## YOU HAVE WRITTEN A NOVEL BASED ON THE ISLAND – TELL US ABOUT IT.

It is called *The Whispering Wind* and I set it in Sardinia so that I could describe the island and its history and traditions. Elise books a holiday in Sardinia with her husband but his violent behaviour is the last straw in their troubled marriage. Encouraged by her solicitor, Elise decides to go ahead with the holiday alone to find some peace. This decision changes her life forever as she is embraced by the Sardinian culture and becomes enamoured of the place and its people. She falls in love with a Sardinian, Beppe, and he delights in showing her his island. Everything seems to be fantastic, until the day she has to face the reality waiting for her in England, and in Sardinia itself. It has had some success; I won three prizes in America for it last year, which was amazing.

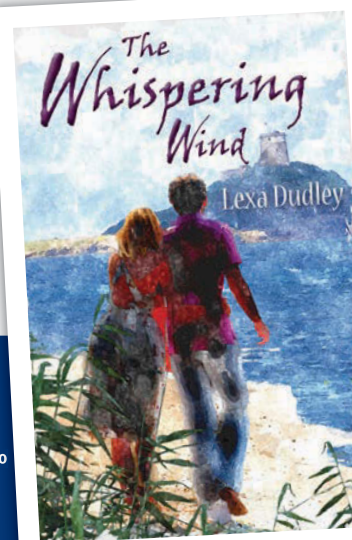
## IF YOU WERE TOLD YOU COULD VISIT SARDINIA ONE LAST TIME, WHERE WOULD YOU GO, AND WHAT WOULD YOU EAT?

What a devastating thought, not to go back to the beaches of the west coast; the south coast with Malfatano, and Nora with its Roman remains; Cagliari with its museums and art galleries – Piazza Yennes for coffee; Villasimius with its white beaches and clear water; Oliena with its ancient Nuragic sites of Serra Orrios and Tiscali; the Sacred Well at Santa Cristina. But for my last visit it would have to be the Giara di Gesturi, a natural paradise with wild horses that overlooks the vast, enchanting Plain of Marmilla. My meal would be in one of the agritourism restaurants with their traditional cooking and surrounded by my many friends from the island. First *malloreddus alla campidanese* followed by *porceddu* (roast suckling pig) then *sebadas*. If I could move after that, fresh oranges or peaches from my friend's orchards.

*The Whispering Wind* is available on Amazon and is now being translated into Italian. Lexa is currently working on her sequel, also set in Sardinia.  
[www.lexadudleywriter.co.uk](http://www.lexadudleywriter.co.uk)



Images courtesy of Lexa Dudley



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

If you want to tell the story of your relationship with Italy – whatever it is – get in touch with us! Send emails to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com) with the subject line 'My Italia' and a brief description of your story.

Images, from top: Lexa with Pinuccio Sciola last year at San Sperate; with Ines and Marcello Serra in Cagliari, 1975; Lexa's first novel



# LAKE COMO

A scenic view of Lake Como. In the foreground, a white speedboat with an outboard motor is moving across the water, leaving a white wake. Several people are on board the boat. In the background, a town with colorful buildings and a church spire is visible on the shore, nestled at the foot of steep, forested mountains. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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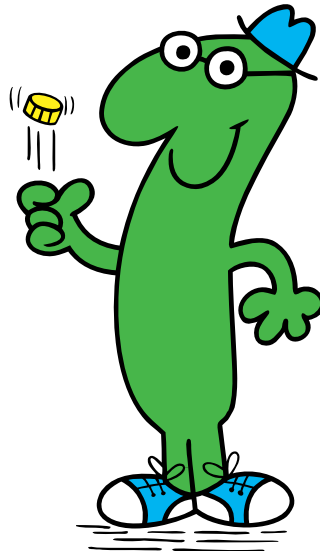
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